

# Candidate Questionnaire on Disability Issues

Please share any connections or experience (professional or personal) you have with people with disabilities and/or the disability community in Missouri.

There are many people who have disabilities who daily impact my life including Brenton, Bill, Greg, Katie, Dillan, Eli, Rudina, and Jennai (employees, former student, relative, friends). My heart is moved for these because I have seen their struggles. Whether operating heavy equipment as an amputee, being self-sufficient as a 4x TBI victim, or just trying to communicate a single word through a VOCA because of cerebral palsy...I have seen their hard-work spawn success. My friends are not bound by their disabilities and that is motivating. My former Sunday School student travelled across the globe to share the love of Jesus with foreign children. The limited capabilities of his arms did not prohibit him from fulfilling his dream as a missionary. These are among the most recent of my connections.

## **Administrative:**

What do you see as the role of government, local, state, and federal, affecting the lives of people with disabilities and what efforts will you make to ensure state agencies serving Missourians with disabilities have the resources and man-power to carry out their functions?

My heart's desire is to serve God and to serve people. I am willing to listen, learn, and then lead to help. My faith informs me of those in need and gives me the wisdom to assist. Government should ensure that all agencies are properly serving our Missourians with disabilities. This requires listening and then examining issues that are directly affecting you.

The areas that need improvement will get attention first. I would also like to gather creative and knowledgeable people to help solve difficult issues. Likewise, we must fund programs that are working and ensure them the adequate man-power. As a leader, it's vital to communicate the value and importance of policy for it to be followed.

How will you include the voice of people with disabilities, their families and those who provide services to them in your administration?

I am a family man, an entrepreneur, and a man of faith. Not being a politician, I will definitely provide the freshest view on issues that are necessary to serving you.

It would be my goal to inform myself by forming an alliance (using Paragard and disabled citizens) to become more familiar with all issues. I would then like to promote some from this group into the Governor's Council on Disability.

A friendly 24-hour phone or internet suggestion line should be set-up so that the Governor's Council on Disability is always aware of needs.

**Health Care Access:**

Do you support covering people in the health insurance gap by increasing eligibility for MO HealthNet to 138% FPL? Do you think some reforms are necessary to ensure coverage, if so, what kind of reforms?

I do believe that the health insurance gap must be covered. During my travel across Missouri, I have met Missourians who are not covered and are suffering. "This is about helping people."

I agree with policy points and reforms of the Paraquad's legislative priorities.

Currently, the Aged, Blind and Disabled category of MO HealthNet recipients are NOT included in managed care. What is your position on managed care for this population and individuals with severe mental illness and addiction disorders? What about the inclusion of long-term supports and services (like Medicaid Waiver services or Consumer Directed Services)?

To protect the healthcare for our community of disabled, we should keep the Fee-For-Service as it is now.

I am in favor of offering in-home and community care when available through Consumer Directed Services. It saves money and allows individuals independence if they chose.

**Housing:**

The availability of affordable, accessible and safe housing is a major barrier for some individuals with disabilities to full community inclusion. What will your administration do to further housing options for persons with disabilities? And how will it do this?

Having experience in real estate and construction, I do believe that we can work with housing developers to create new affordable, safe housing. There are many possibilities and options for accomplishing this. It will require some incentive to be given to builders. Likewise, much of the affordability will depend on finding great locations.

## **Employment and Economic Equality and Independence:**

People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty, and have the lowest employment rate, compared to any other minority population. Often, people with disabilities who need to access supports and services only public programs provide (personal attendant services, Medicaid waiver services, etc.) fear losing their services if they make too much money. How will you improve employment and economic outcomes for people with disabilities while allowing people to retain necessary benefits?

We should not punish people with disabilities by restricting or removing benefits if they are working. Missouri should offer incentives to work when possible, not discourage it. I will work the Department of Labor and use their expertise and in-depth knowledge in this area to assist in making this progressive decisions.

In the last three years the U.S. Department of Justice has taken over 50 legal actions in 25 states including Federal lawsuits and court settlements enforcing the civil rights of persons with disabilities under the ADA which states people with disabilities have a right to live and work in integrated community settings. This past July a new federal law, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) went into effect. This law creates new standards for transitions from school to integrated work in the community for persons with disabilities. School and other community agencies are charged with focusing on integrated work before exploring sheltered work options. Given these mandates, what can Missouri do to move forward to be in compliance and be leaders in this area?

Again, I would have to get advice from a commission of people including disability experts who best understand these problems and what the possible solutions are.

## **Education:**

Please outline the steps your administration would take to ensure that students with disabilities in our public schools are educated in their neighborhood schools and included in classrooms with students without disabilities. These students would be provided equal access to the curriculum, and are able to obtain assistive technologies and other related educational supports that adequately prepare them to become productive members of our communities.

Students with disabilities should be offered the equal access to curriculum and have assistive technology. Our students deserve the best education and teachers. We must fully fund our schools.

We need more emphasis on co-teaching so that our students can remain in the classroom and have the exposure to equal curriculum standards.

When we invest in the education of all children, including those with disabilities, we're investing in a strong economy. What steps would your administration take to ensure that students with disabilities are adequately prepared to transition to competitive employment and/or post-secondary education?

We must ensure we have standards for our students with disabilities so they are adequately prepared for their future.

We can improve and assist the writing of transitional goals in IEP's that give students who are working on necessary goals for the post secondary goals they have for themselves.

It is also important to implement the highest level of assistive technology to allow the student the most complete educational experience.

### **Rights:**

Following the events of Ferguson, Police Officer Standards Training (POST) requirements were increased. Missouri has Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) and CIT councils in a number of areas in the state whose focus is to help improve interaction between law enforcement and persons with mental illness. In addition, First Responder Disability Awareness Training (FRDAT) for each first responder discipline (law enforcement, fire/EMS and 911 dispatchers) will be implemented in Missouri. These trainings are vital given the number of people with disabilities who are not properly identified or understood, which has led to ongoing victimization on persons with disabilities, inappropriate interactions, false arrests, unjust incarcerations or even death. What would your administration do to continue and expand this much needed education for law enforcement officers and other first responders?

I believe in equipping our police officers with every type of training that will benefit them in serving and protecting our public. It is necessary for them to understand the people and situations they may encounter for everyone's safety.

In 2015, for individuals determined 'incapacitated/disabled', courts awarded over 2,400 full guardianships and only 63 limited guardianships. Missouri courts disproportionately award full guardianship, which strips a person with a disability of all their rights, even though there are less restrictive options available. How will you support the reform of Missouri's 30+ year old guardianship statute to better support Missourians and assist them in retaining and restoring more of their rights as they are able?

I agree Missouri should continue to reforming the guardianship statute to better serve our citizens. Those who are disabled should always retain their rights when possible and the court should always investigate less restrictive options.

### **Funding and Access to Services:**

A history of inconsistent and underfunded rates has led to a system that no longer covers the cost of doing business for community provider organizations. Providers are experiencing a workforce crisis hampered by low wages, a lack of health insurance, high turnover, and a shortage of staff. Demand for these workers from private industry and other human services sectors compete for these workers. In addition, nearly 65% of the 95,000 individuals with developmental disabilities are not connected with the service system and many live at home with aging parents, representing a significant future demand on the system. How will you ensure a robust service system for Missourians with developmental disabilities now and in the future?

My plan is to bring foreign manufacturing back to domestic production here in Missouri. I believe that individuals with developmental disabilities would be the major component for success in this endeavor. One of my first entrepreneurial experiences was working with a sheltered workshop staff in Franklin County. I see great potential in this plan.

Many rural Centers for Independent Living have catchment areas of 4,000 square miles and 9 counties and urban Centers have extremely high population densities to serve. How would you make sure all CILs have capacity to serve people with disabilities in their catchment areas?

For those who were willing to relocate into a rural area would be easiest solution. Understandably, not everyone wants to move nor should they have to. This would be an issue that I would have to consult with Disability group leaders for the best solutions.

Hearing loss can be a significant impediment to seniors wanting to stay connected to, and remain independent in, their community. Over 600,000 Missourians, including seniors, have hearing loss and 90% of them are not Sign Language users. Instead they rely on hearing aids. This group often cannot afford hearing aids (they are not covered by MO HealthNet). What will your administration do to ensure access to hearing aids?

Hearing aids should be affordable to everyone. It would be best to offer free hearing aids to the citizens at the lowest poverty levels with a sliding scale based on income.

**Behavioral Health:**

What would you do to improve the opioid epidemic facing our state?

I have met with a chief state drug task force agent and became aware of the seriousness of this issue. Likewise, for several years I served as a youth mentor for troubled youth in the public school system and I discovered how young people were abusing prescription drugs.

I do believe in a limited Prescription Drug Monitoring Program for opioids. I am against adding Missouri citizens to a nationalized list.

What will be your plan to address the leading cause of disability (behavioral health) in the nation? And for those in recovery, what would you do to help access recovery supports (such as employment, housing, education, etc) for individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders?

My wife is a counselor and we have seen the lack of mental health treatment facilities in our state. I want to introduce 12 new centers to accommodate those who desperately need them. We believe in working with counseling centers, hospitals, jails, and courts to promote recovery support.

Insurance companies have shortened lengths of stay, thus potentially harming treatment. Addressing this issue along with the affordability of medication is also essential.