



ALLIANCE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE NJ GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Jim Johnson

1. Currently NJ unemployment rates are approximately 53% among people with disabilities. If elected, what efforts would your administration undergo to hire qualified individuals with disabilities as well as encourage the private sector?

We need to help ease the transition for disabled individuals between education and adulthood. As many disability advocates have said, in the law's eyes, it's almost as though someone with disabilities vanishes when they turn 21. I will work to ensure that businesses follow the legislation concerning the disabled community, and will enact punishment for those who don't. However if we truly want change, we need to include the private sector in this discussion. I will work to ensure that the private sector is incentivized to hire those with disabilities.

2. What steps should the State of New Jersey take to increase access to public transportation currently not served by NJ Transit? (I.e. Sussex County, Somerset County)

Transit conversations often revolve around train and light rails. New Jersey needs to have a robust conversation about other forms of public transportation like buses, which can more easily reach less accessible locations like Sussex and Somerset County. As Governor, I will work to ensure that the disabled community has access to public transportation, wherever they may be in the state.

3. Even though the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990, people with disabilities still face accessibility barriers. For example, inaccessible stores, elevators broken at train stations and snow removal laws not being upheld. What will your administration do to fight discrimination and enforce the ADA?

As Governor, I will strongly uphold, support and protect the crucial pieces of legislation that protect the disabled community, including the ADA and

504. It is inconceivable that there still exists discrimination against those with disabilities in our state, and I will work to end these acts. We must work to protect the rights and civil liberties granted to all the citizens of New Jersey, not just a select few of them. I will work to make sure that the laws are followed and will enact punishments on those who refuse to comply.

4. Do you support or oppose proposals to block grant or per capita cap Medicaid spending in NJ? What Medicaid services in NJ, if any, would you seek to eliminate under a block grant or per capita spending system?

The Trump Administration has signaled with its actions that the disability community could be under grave threat. Their proposal for Medicaid block grants would fundamentally change the way in which disability services are delivered. If they are successful, we would see eligibility changes, coverage cutbacks and longer waiting lists. As Governor, I will fight with everything that I have to ensure that that does not happen. Working with New Jersey's congressional delegation and disability advocates, we will push back hard against those proposed changes.

5. If elected, what would your administration do to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the planning and implementation of emergency preparedness efforts on the county, state and local levels?

I am running my campaign on a platform to bring ethics and civil liberties back to the state of New Jersey. Currently, the leaders of this state have neglected the rights of many to serve the lives of the few, and I plan to change this dynamic. I will ensure that the members of my administration are competent and aware of the actions and consequences of their decision-making so that no one community is left to suffer. As Governor, I will require thorough review of new and existing emergency preparedness efforts such that all members of our state are accounted for.

6. In NJ, there is a shortage of accessible, safe and low-income housing for people with disabilities. How would you propose to increase the inventory of housing throughout the state?

We need to help families wade through the patchwork of regulations and get access to the services they are legally entitled to. This is especially true when it comes to housing. I know that too many families wait years for affordable, accessible housing for disabled individuals. As Governor, I would work to shorten that waiting period.

7. Persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities are victimized by sexual assault crimes at much higher rates than the rest of the population, and they are

often targeted specifically because of their disabilities. What steps would your administration take to reduce the risk of crimes committed against people with disabilities? Would you direct your Attorney General's office to work more closely with disability agencies on training and prevention?

It is inexcusable that we have sat on the sidelines for so long while members of our community have been victims of the most horrible crimes. As Governor, I will make sure that my Attorney General's office works closer with disability agencies, for they are experts in the field of training and prevention. We need to make use of the resources we have available to protect all of our citizens, including the disabled community.

8. In the *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states are required to eliminate unnecessary segregation of persons with disabilities and to ensure that persons with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. Do you feel the state is doing what it can do to fully implement this ruling? If not, what measures does NJ need to take?

I believe the state can take more comprehensive measures to implement this ruling, such as incentivizing businesses to update their facilities to be cross-disability accessible, expanding pathways from school-to-work for disabled persons, and expanding programs which support independent living of disabled persons.

9. If elected, would you support or oppose legislation prohibiting insurance companies conducting business in New Jersey from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions?

If elected, I would support legislation which prohibits insurance companies conducting business in New Jersey from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions. Denying coverage to or raising prices for those with pre-existing conditions is a form of discrimination that cannot and will not be tolerated if I am elected.

10. Do you support the proposal by the Coalition of Direct Support Professionals Living Wage, which would increase the salary of support professionals by \$1.25 per hour every year for five years, bringing the starting hourly wage to \$16.75 by the year 2022. This will attract more support professionals to the field and reduce the high turnover rate that is currently 44%.

Yes, I support the proposal by the Coalition of DSP Living Wage to bring starting hourly wage to \$16.75 for support professionals by year 2022. My commitment to integrating disabled persons into his/her community includes providing them with the most experienced, talented support

professionals possible, and encouraging DSPs to not only join but stay within the network with an increase in wages is a common sense measure we can take to move that goal forward.

11. State and federal law provide that students with disabilities have a right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Do you support or oppose increased funding to ensure that New Jersey public schools and teachers have the resources and training necessary to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities?

I support increasing funding to public schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the form of amending the school funding formula to provide an adequate amount of money toward special education programs in individual districts based on the actual number of students with disabilities in each district instead of an average. As recommended by the NJ Task Force on Improving Special Education for Public School Students, the formula should also take into account socioeconomic indicators, transportation costs to school, etc., so as to properly serve the needs of students with disabilities.

12. Centers for Independent Living are community-based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities. CILs are unique in that they operate according to a strict philosophy of consumer control, wherein people with all types of disabilities directly govern and staff the organization. As a vital resource in the community, would you support additional funding for the 11 CILs in order to meet the increased demand for our services?

I absolutely support additional funding for Centers for Independent Living. The more counties and citizens with disabilities we can serve with CILs, the better off our state will be.

13. In April 2012, Governor Chris Christie made New Jersey an 'Employment First' state. It means that competitive employment is the first and preferred post-education activity for everyone, including people with disabilities. However, there are still approximately only 47% of the population of people with disabilities in NJ, ages 18 to 64, employed (compared to 79.5% of same age group in the general population). How do you propose to increase employment among New Jerseyans with disabilities?

We can make a few improvements in New Jersey which will help put more of our citizens with disabilities to work. If elected, I will expand a wage-sharing program which incentivizes private businesses to hire qualified individuals with disabilities by granting funds to make their business disabled-accessible and funds to cover the wages of disabled individuals during their trainee period. Additionally, we must fight to keep Medicaid

from being rolled back as the AHCA goes into effect, as multiple studies have shown that the expansion of Medicaid correlates with higher employment among disabled individuals.

14. If nominated by your party for the general election, would you commit to addressing the crowd at the NJ Disability Pride Parade & Celebration on Saturday, October 7th in Trenton?

I will absolutely commit to addressing the crowd at the NJ Disability Pride Parade & Celebration. I would be happy to show my support for a group of people which is, and will always be, a vital part of our NJ community.