



## ALLIANCE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE NJ GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE

**NAME:** Seth Kaper-Dale

**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?

Part of how I would hire qualified individuals with disabilities to work in my administration would be through advertising job openings through media outlets and forums that focus on the disability community. To encourage the private sector, I would support trainings and workshops to educate employers about different social behaviors and responses that they should be aware of in their interview and hiring processes to avoid accidentally discriminating against people for reasons unrelated to ability to perform job functions. I would also look into formalizing an incentives program like the one I worked out for hiring people from the Workfirst Program in my affordable housing corporation. We were supported by the State in hiring a new project manager we otherwise couldn't afford and then eased off of the support in an agreed timeframe in which we would be ready to pay the person full time by ourselves. Additionally, I believe the state should launch a media campaign to raise awareness of the capacity of people with disabilities to contribute professionally in the work place.

**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)

The key to saving the transportation system in New Jersey lies in making our state more conducive to commuting. Smart growth efforts to develop housing reasonably near mass transit stations should increase in order to promote specific development strategies by location and generate revenues, meet the growing demand for energy-efficient travel, and lower prices. Growing the reach of New Jersey Transit to include communities

**not currently served could and should involve starting shuttle systems in those areas to get people to the main bus and train routes.**

**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?

**Based on the recommendations shared with me while meeting with ACI members, I would be happy to have accessibility-related alerts added to the State and local nixle systems to reduce wasted travel time and anxiety for people with disabilities. To hold public and private property managers accountable to the ADA, I will establish and publicize a web site where people can report businesses for their adherence or lack of adherence to the law. While fines can certainly be attached to violations, my expectation would be that the public shaming/ public praise factor would provide the bulk of the reinforcement needed for businesses to comply. Additionally we need to examine possible modifications to improve access to NJ Transit buses. Since I already plan to overhaul the bus fleet in order to cut carbon emissions through the use of hybrid and electrical vehicles we would look at improving accessibility at the same time.**

**4.** Do you support or oppose proposals to block grant or per capital 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?

**I absolutely oppose block grants for Medicaid. A key component of my campaign is my intention to enact single-payer Medicare for all. Not only is this a moral obligation, but it is economically redeeming. Putting any kind of cap on healthcare would be devastating as illness and injury are obviously unpredictable. Conversely, a universal healthcare system in New Jersey will open up equal access to quality healthcare as needed while reducing the costs of the unnecessary and harmful health insurance industry.**

**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 have found that the best way to include people with disabilities in important initiatives like emergency preparedness is to engage formally with consumer, family, and provider groups, as well as with the government officials leading the efforts. I would make sure that representatives from the Office of Emergency Management attend collaborative meetings in which all of the above listed stakeholders are**

**involved in composing emergency plans and that there is also mixed representation in the staff itself.**

**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?

**As founder and volunteer executive director of Reformed Church of Highland Park Affordable Housing Corporation, I have developed an expertise in providing supportive housing for people in various special needs groups, including adults with mental illness. I support the Build a Thriving New Jersey initiative undertaken by a coalition of leading affordable housing advocates in New Jersey, which promotes investing \$600 million into several programs aimed at creating affordable housing. Additionally, I have an ambitious goal of stopping towns from trying to keep voucher-holders out and perpetuate segregation. If towns won't comply with established requirements for building or providing affordable housing, then their school districts will be desegregated through redistricting, expanding access to quality education for families of all types of abilities as well as all races and income levels.**

**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?

**I will direct my Attorney General's office to work more closely with disability agencies on training and prevention. I know that the solutions lie in the hands of the people who are doing the research and direct service for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities every day. I will follow guidance from groups like the National Sexual Violence Resource Center on supporting public awareness campaigns, informing sexual assault survivors and the general public of their rights, and promoting appropriate bystander intervention. Regarding people with disabilities specifically, I will seek counsel from disability agencies for how to maximize the effectiveness of my plans for better integrated housing and schooling in ceasing the tendency of predators to target people from this population.**

**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 am most familiar with the Olmstead Act in terms of how it has affected residential services for people with disabilities. While the housing first model has become widely accepted as the best method of integration and most effective method of service delivery, safe, integrated and independent housing options still do not reach nearly enough people who need them. Six years ago my non-profit housing corporation teamed up with a local DDD-approved service provider to build two homes in community for individuals coming out of state hospitals. I know there is the will out there to do more development like this. I endorse the Build a Thriving New Jersey campaign to put \$600 million into several programs to advance the reach of the housing first model. Beyond that, I will seek legislation to prohibit towns from keeping families with subsidies out and thereby segregating their schools. In my administration, towns will have to either build or make available housing for families with vouchers, or otherwise have their schools integrated through redistricting.**

**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?

**I strongly oppose the use of pre-existing conditions to deny healthcare. It is worth mentioning that the centerpiece of my campaign is my plan to enact single-payer healthcare for all in New Jersey. Medicare for all would provide equal quality healthcare to everybody, regardless of wealth and status, and regardless of pre-existing conditions. In addition, Medicare for all would save both municipalities and employers the money they are currently contributing to health insurance, which will bring property taxes and rents down, and facilitate compliance with a new \$15 an hour minimum wage.**

**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%.

**I believe support professionals are given great responsibility and deserve to be recognized for the role they play. Therefore I do support the incremental wage increase you mention. However, with a \$15/hr minimum wage in NJ made easy after savings my NJ Medicare for All plan would bring about by cutting out the insurance middle-man, I hope we will see support professionals above \$16.25 by 2022.**

**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?

**Absolutely I support increased funding to ensure schools have the adequate resources and training for students with disabilities. I must say however, that this is part of a large issue of the de-funding of public education in New Jersey, which my administration would seek to address.**

**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 am inspired by the Center for Independent Living structure and philosophy and I absolutely support additional funding for these organizations as is needed to meet demand. The philosophy of consumer control mitigates exploitation of people with different abilities and strengthens communities that are unnecessarily vulnerable. Furthermore, cross-disability participation allows a unified advocacy effort towards common interests. I look forward to working with CILs to advance integration and participatory management principles in New Jersey's communities.**

**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?

**This is a serious problem which I don't have all the answers to and as I mentioned when I met with folks in your Edison office, I would love to keep discussing this with you. As I mentioned earlier, I would promote advertising job openings through media outlets and forums that focus on the disability community. To encourage the private sector, I would support trainings and workshops to educate employers about different social behaviors and responses that they should be aware of in their interview and hiring processes to avoid accidentally discriminating against people for reasons unrelated to ability to perform job functions. Another thing we**

**need to do is launch an increased awareness campaign geared toward the general public on the contributions and capacities of people with disabilities.**

**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 have already been nominated by the Green Party and I will appear on the General Election ballot. At any rate the October 7, Disability Pride Parade is already scheduled on my calendar so yes, I DO commit to attend.**