

1) What can you cite from your previous professional, personal or legislative experience that highlights how you would support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) if elected to office in November? If you do not have previous experience with the population we represent, what steps will you take in the future to support people with I/DD?

Since entering public office I have sought to be a partner with organizations in South Jersey and nationally that work on behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I have been honored to receive awards from Easter Seals and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) for my work advocating for I/DD individuals, specifically our veterans. I have also cosponsored various legislation to advance equal access for individuals with disabilities and voted for critical legislation that supports I/DD individuals including the "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act" and the "Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support (CARES) Act". If re-elected, I will continue to be a partner with those in the disability rights movement, like The ARC, that seek to bring parity for individuals living with disabilities.

2) Individuals with I/DD and their families depend on Direct Support Professionals (DSP) who deliver one-on-one services. However, while these staff members assist with critical tasks of daily living and are integral to successful community integration for those we represent, the starting salary for a DSP is only \$10.50 an hour. This low wage has created a significant hiring and retention crisis and diminished the size of this important workforce. If elected in November, what will you do to address wages for DSP?

There are limited options at the federal level to raise the starting salary of Direct Support Professionals; Congress does not set the base wages for specific industries. However, I would look at legislation that could help offset the costs DSP incur in their education and specialized training. Retaining qualified healthcare and support professionals is a problem across the spectrum, thus a broad discussion and consensus of all stakeholders must occur to find solutions to this issue.

3) Medicaid and Social Security serve as the lifeline for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These federal programs provide the necessary funding and support to keep people with I/DD living integrated lives with the community. If elected or re-elected in November, what will you do to protect Medicaid and Social Security programs from any potential cuts?

I have consistently voted to protect Social Security and Medicaid from efforts that would undermine these vital lifelines for the most vulnerable in our communities. I opposed President Bush's attempt to privatize Social Security and subsequent proposals that would reduce benefits for current beneficiaries or those 55 years old or older. While Social Security is not in any immediate threat of insolvency, we must look to protect the program for future generations. There should be a national debate about proposed changes to Social Security, reaching a

bipartisan consensus. We must update how cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) are calculated, moving away from the 1970s-era formula to better reflect current costs to seniors.