

New York Association on Independent Living

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is a statewide, not-for-profit membership association created by and composed of 42 Independent Living Centers (ILCs) across New York State. NYAIL is the statewide voice for its membership's efforts to eliminate physical, communications, attitudinal, and other barriers to all aspects of life. NYAIL advocates for the civil rights, independence and full participation of all people with disabilities.

NYAIL has developed a brief questionnaire which touches on issues of critical importance to the disability community. Disability touches many aspects of life, and as such, NYAIL's concerns are wide ranging, including health, community integration, transportation, housing, voting rights and employment. We are requesting you complete this questionnaire so that voters with disabilities and their families can make an informed electoral choice on these extremely important issues.

Candidate Questionnaire

1. People with disabilities would rather stay in their own homes rather than nursing homes. In New York State, especially in rural areas, people can't get the help they need because of a shortage of personal care aides (PCAs). Aides have very low wages and struggle to make ends meet for their own families. What is your plan to address this crisis?

- Fund a personal care aide wage at least 150% of the state minimum wage with indexing.
- Develop worker co-ops for personal care aides on the model of the Bronx's Cooperative Home Care Associates so all income after overhead costs are covered go to the workers.
- Repeal the NYS Department of Labor regulation allowing no pay for 11 hours of 24-hour shifts by home care workers.
- Prohibit 24-Hour shifts in the home care industry and require split shifts, with overtime pay over 40 hours a week
- Require the state Department of Health to implement all services included in the Affordable Care Act's Community First Choice Option.
- Make New York compliant with Center for Medicaid and Medicare requirements to end discrimination based on disability type.
- Equalize reimbursement between Consumer Directed Personal Assistance, personal care, and community habilitation.

2. People with disabilities who need care at home are required by the State to enroll in managed long-term care health plans. Unfortunately, these plans often wrongly restrict access to necessary services. What would your Administration do to ensure that plans provide the services people need and are entitled to?

- Strengthen regulation of managed long-term care plans to ensure services are not being restricted to maximize profits.
- Require managed care plans to reimburse providers an amount sufficient to cover the costs of doing business.
- Enact the NY Health Act for universal single-payer health care with an amendment to cover long-term care immediately, not in two years.
- Consider a dedicated stream of funding for a Universal Home Care Program through a payroll tax on income above the amount subject to Social Security taxes, which is \$128,400 in 2018, as

Maine is considering with 3.8% payroll tax on such income in a citizens initiative referendum in this year's election.

3. What is your position on legalizing assisted suicide in New York State?

I oppose legalizing assisted suicide in New York State. We already have too many cases of care givers murdering their clients. The experience with assisted suicide in Oregon is that care givers will shop around for a doctor willing to perform the procedure. While people wanting to commit suicide often cite lost autonomy, people with disabilities live fulfilling lives with appropriate assistance. We have ways to manage pain and provide palliative care for the terminally ill. The answer to the problems of disability, pain, and illness is proper care, not assisted suicide. Another tragic motivation is the cost of care so the ill or injured not only lose any estate they can pass on but their families are forced to pay for their care. Health care should be a human right and provided as a public good through progressive taxation, not by individualized out-of-pocket expenses that can become a motivation for suicide when costs escalate.

4. New York State currently relies on sheltered workshops that pay people with disabilities well under the minimum wage for their work. At the same time, the workers are not provided any training to help them succeed in integrated workplaces. Would you support phasing out sheltered workshops in New York State?

Yes. I would also repeal the laws and policies that permit employers to exploit people with disabilities at below minimum wages.

5. The employment rate for people with disabilities is only 33 percent, lower than it is at the national level. What specific actions would you take to improve employment options for people with disabilities?

- Follow through on the state's Employment First policy, which has failed to meet its goals on time.
- Put more state funding into job training and employer incentives to help people with disabilities integrate into regular workplaces.
- Establish a Green Labor Administration (GLAD) that uses public money to employ people at living wages who have trouble finding work, including people with disabilities, and are willing and able to work meeting community-defined needs for improved public services, industries, and infrastructure.

6. For people with disabilities, educational attainment is critical to obtaining work and earning a living. Students with disabilities are less likely to complete high school and college than students with no disabilities. What would your administration do to remove the barriers that students face?

- Vigorously enforce the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Make public transportation more accessible to people with disabilities so public schools and colleges are accessible.
- Fully fund public schools in accordance with the Foundation Aid formula.
- Make sure fully-funded public schools are providing all educational opportunities to students with disabilities.

- Stop the push out by schools of students with disabilities, which diminishes their opportunities and can put them on the streets and into the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Require lead-safe certification of rental units to stop the disabling lead poisoning of children, as high as 40% of children in Syracuse and Buffalo who have lead blood levels above the federal safety standard of 5 micrograms per decaliter.
- Spend the \$1.5 billion a year needed to make SUNY and CUNY truly tuition free.

7. There is a housing crisis for people with disabilities in New York State. There is a critical shortage of affordable, accessible, and integrated housing. As a result, people with disabilities are more likely to be homeless than people with no disability. How would you propose to address this shortage of housing?

- Expand quality, mixed-income, human-scale, scatter-site public housing with sufficient units for people with disabilities to meet the need for affordable, accessible and integrated housing. The private housing market with government incentives for affordable and accessible housing has utterly failed to meet the demand. Public housing is the most cost-effective and accountable way to meet the need.
- Expand regulations for accessibility for people with disabilities to include 1- and 2-family units as well as multi-family units.
- Expand funding for the Access to Home program from the current \$1 million to at least \$10 million to build ramps and other accessibility improvements on all the 1- and 2-family homes in New York State that need them.
- Expand funding for the Supportive Housing program to fully fund 20,000 needed units of supportive housing that provides permanent housing combined with on-site services for people with problems with substance abuse, mental health, and/or physical needs. Make sure the program serves people with disabilities.

8. Landlords discriminate against tenants with disabilities who have SSI and rental subsidies that will pay their rent. This discrimination results in high levels of homelessness among people with disabilities. Would you support a prohibition of discrimination based on source of income?

I do support a statewide law to prohibit source-of-income discrimination. I supported the passage of such a law by the City of Syracuse in 2017.

9. New York's public transportation systems are not accessible and not affordable for people with disabilities. Upstate, there are areas with either very limited bus service, or none at all. In New York City, the subway system is one of the least accessible in the country. As Governor, what would you do to address this lack of accessible transportation statewide?

- Enact congestion pricing (\$1.5 billion), a more progressive income tax including escalating marginal brackets on multi-million dollar incomes (\$10 billion), retain instead of rebate the stock transfer tax (\$12-16 billion), and claw back the Trump corporate tax cut windfall unless used to raise wages and create new jobs (\$5 billion) to raise an additional \$30 billion or so a year. Use it to fund the 10-year, \$37 Fast Forward plan to fix the subways, including making all stations accessible, and expand public transit across the state, as well as other improvements to public transit and other infrastructure upgrades across the state.
- Put a strict budget line in the state budget in place of multiple and shifting revenue sources to fund all regional transportation authorities and increase their funding.

- Prioritize rural on on-call and para-transit minibuses. Change the state policy for their operating budgets to reach everyone within 2 miles instead of $\frac{3}{4}$ of mile from bus routes.

10. Outside of New York City, people with disabilities can't take taxis or hire cars because taxis and companies such as Uber do not have accessible cars and transportation. What would you do as Governor to rectify this lack of accessibility?

Develop for-hire ride platforms as public utilities that operate at cost for public benefit, not private profit. The utilities would contract with drivers organized into worker co-ops that must provide at least 50% wheelchair accessible vehicles to receive contracts. Regional transportation authorities should provide subsidies to cover operating losses when reasonable fares cannot.

11. People with disabilities who are not served by the Office of Mental Health and the Office for Persons with Disabilities have no representation in State government. Previous State agencies such as the Advocate for People with Disabilities and the Commission on Quality of Care for Persons with Disabilities were eliminated, leaving no voice in budget and policy matters for people with disabilities. As Governor, how would you ensure that the interests of people with disabilities are reflected in the State policy and budget realm?

Create/restore a single staffed and funded office for all disability issues in the administration with representatives of all disability groups to provide expertise and advocacy on budgets and policies for people with disabilities. It should include people with mobility as well as mental and developmental issues.

12. People with disabilities take their role as citizens very seriously, we want to vote like our neighbors. But physical and technical barriers in the voting process suppress the disability vote. Polling sites are often physically inaccessible, materials in alternate formats and ASL interpreters are unavailable on Election Day. Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs) will soon need to be updated. How would you remove these barriers to voting?

- Require all polling places to be fully accessible.
- Every polling place should have tablets that help the visually impaired and roving sign language interpreters for the hearing impaired who can reach any of their assigned polling places on short notice.
- Make online registration and absentee ballots accessible to the blind and visually impaired with technologies that are now available.
- Reform the ballots to make them easier to read and understand for the visually impaired and everyone by having a separate page with larger print for every race or ballot measure. Replace a separate ballot line for every party with a separate line for every candidate with all the candidate's party endorsements under the candidate's name on that line.

13. Independent Living Centers are unique disability-lead organizations that help more than 100,000 people with disabilities live independent, integrated lives in the community through training, information and referral, and direct advocacy. ILCs save the State billions of dollars by reducing costly institutional placements. The Board of Regents have recommended to the Governor that past two years that ILC funding be increased by \$5 million, but this recommendation has not been included in the Executive Budget proposal. As Governor, will you increase funding to independent living centers?

Yes. A \$5 million increase has been recommended by the Department of Education and the Board of Regents. ICL funding has been frozen at \$13 million for a decade. It is past time for an increase.