

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?

First, New York State has to commit the necessary funding to implement the State's Olmstead Plan, including programs such as disability-led independent living centers, home care, and Access to Home. These calls have been ignored by the Governor's Office despite funding proposals from both houses of the legislature. Securing additional federal funding by fully implementing the Community First Choice Option (CFCO) for people with disabilities should also be a priority. The demand for services is there, and by ensuring a vibrant market for care, we can ensure there is a healthy supply of PCAs to meet the needs of our residents. Supporting and incentivizing training programs around the state for PCA's should also be a priority for Albany.

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?

We need to hold Managed Long-Term Care (MLTC) companies accountable and make sure they are following the law. Where necessary, the Department of Health (DOH) may have to retroactively restore homecare that has unlawfully reduced, even in cases where residents have agreed to the reduction. DOH should be proactive in auditing MLTCs to ensure that due process has been followed, and create better communication channels for complaints and queries.

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

There should be mechanism in place that help patients who are terminally ill and in great pain asses options for end of life care. This must be mulifacted--with multiple consulted doctors, family members and cognitive evaluation of patient before any final decisions are made. No one should have to be forced to prolong unnecessary suffering and there should be more clarity in what alternatives health care providers and medical professionals in New York can offer patients.

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 led the way in raising the minimum wage for city employees in Syracuse to \$15 before Albany took any action and we will do the same for people with disabilities. We will support phasing out sheltered workshops in New York State and make that all workers are protected from wage abuse in our state. I also believe that the key to long-term integration of disabled people in the workforce is providing adequate training and continuous opportunities for expanding both basic training skill sets and staying ahead of new trends in the workforce. Both state programs that support training and private companies that provide training should be promoted.

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?

Businesses owned by people with disabilities are more likely to hire people with disabilities, so promoting these opportunities and creating a forum that helps disabled people find jobs is essential. When I was the mayor in Syracuse, our Joint Schools Construction Board program set goals of 9% minority and 6% women contracting enterprises for school renovations, which we exceeded. We then raised the bar for 20% for MWBE participation and 20% for local businesses. These public commitments are important both to hold ourselves accountable for changing the status quo, and for sending a message to vendors that the State is serious about our commitment to developing a thriving, inclusive economy for all New Yorkers. As governor, I will include businesses owned by people with disabilities, already being done in several cities around the country, in our contracting goals.

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?

Combating barriers to education has always been a priority for me. No student should be impeded from obtaining a High School diploma because the school they are in cannot adequately accommodate their disability. In many districts, this will mean supplementing existing programs with online course options. Seventeen other states already provide Course Access programs, and New York must follow suit and make sure that everyone has access to complete the necessary requirements for graduation. The state must do a better job of providing special education teachers in classrooms where they are needed and create better incentives for teacher training in special education needs.

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?

As mayor, homelessness was a priority and Syracuse became one of the first cities in the US to end veteran homelessness. This was accomplished by partnering with stakeholders both to combat poverty and address affordable housing needs. We will apply this same approach for people with disabilities. We must support innovative programs such as the House Stability Support (HSS) program which, for example, seeks a statewide rent supplement for low-income families those who find themselves facing homelessness due to domestic violence or hazardous conditions. A pragmatic assessment of where shortages are most acute in New York must be made to identify ways to ensure that new developments are incentivized to bridge the gap in housing availability.

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?

Yes. If a tenant can prove they have an income, it should not matter where it is coming from. As Mayor of Syracuse I signed legislation that prohibited the discriminating against income sources.

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?

The current administration has let most of our transit infrastructure wither under its watch. As Governor, we will bring the MTA into a state of good repair as soon as possible. As we renovate stations we have to ensure that they are up to ADA standards and accessible to all New Yorkers. I would welcome insight and suggestions from disability advocate organizations and would look forward to working with the community in understanding the current shortfalls and best ways to provide greater accessibility.

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?

We will work with lawmakers to ensure that, much like New York City's cabs, companies such as Uber and Lyft provide comprehensive service for people with disabilities, which could lead to a reduction in Medicaid and paratransit costs for the state.

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?

As Governor, I will reinstate the State Office for the Advocate for People with Disabilities – originally created by Mario Cuomo - which will work with the disability community and have the authority to act as an advocate on their behalf across state agencies. We will also make sure it has adequate funding in order to hire a staff under the Advocate, in order to ensure the office has the ability to create meaningful improvements in state policy and operations.

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?

New York ranks poorly in terms of voter registration and voter participation generally, though our restrictive ballot access laws impact the disabled community acutely. To reverse these trends, we need to recognize that both parties have exploited their position to create laws that favor incumbents and stifle democratic choice.

To truly restore trust in government, we need to revitalize voter participation: (1) pursue non-partisan redistricting; (2) establish vote by mail; (3) early voting; (4) no excuse absentee voting, (5) provide automatic and same day voter registration; and (6) support nonpartisan special elections for open state legislative seats.

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. As governor, I will stop ignoring the benefits of Independent Living Centers and approve the Board of Regents proposal and increase funding for ILCs by \$5 million.