**1) Education and Skills: What steps will you take to ensure that students with disabilities of all backgrounds have what they need to succeed?**

Like you, I agree that ensuring students with disabilities of all backgrounds have what they need to succeed is extremely important. While the Los Angeles City Council doesn’t have direct oversight of L.A. Schools, I’m a strong supporter of many local organizations that champion students with physical and developmental disabilities and I have been a vocal proponent of access and inclusion.

With regard to the Payan vs LACCD case, I strongly supported a City Council resolution to put the City of Los Angeles on record supporting “the civil rights of people with disabilities and hereby opposes the LACCD plan to petition the US Supreme Court (Court) to eliminate foundational portions of the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504).”

Also, New Horizons honored me with their Partners for a Bright Future award for my work on behalf of the developmentally disabled community. Easter Seals California gave me the Assembly Leadership Award for helping protect critical services for Californians with disabilities during the last Great Recession.

When I served in the state assembly as the budget chair during that recession, I successfully pushed back on attempts to cut the budget of key programs that offer lifelines for those with physical and developmental disabilities. I authored AB96 in the wake of the pending elimination of the Adult Day Health Care Program. Though the legislation was vetoed, I was able to secure $80 million to help the 37,000 low-income elderly and people with disabilities who relied on this program.

On the city level, I’ve continued this work. One group that I’ve worked closely with over the years is Tierra Del Sol. In fact, my former District Director Lyn Shaw worked there before joining my team, as did one of my field deputies. Together we helped create an internship program for their clients, offering young adults with disabilities opportunities to work in my office. We have hosted interns who were blind, who had intellectual disabilities, and who had sensory differences because this sort of accessibility in local government is important to all of our interns.

**2) Access and Inclusion: Whether or not you have a formal platform, what specific plans do you have to incorporate the voices of people with disabilities into your decision-making processes, if elected? What steps, if any, have you taken to make your campaign accessible for people with disabilities and to ensure that our voices are heard?**

There are many issues, including public works, that have a heightened impact on people with disabilities and historically those communities have been underrepresented in the decision-making process. From the processes around how the city fixes sidewalks to making public transportation as well as first/last mile more accessible to the disability community, we need to continue to grow the voices in the conversation, and I will continue to do just that.

One of the big issues I’m currently working on with organizations from the disability community is overhauling the City’s sidewalk maintenance and repair program. In November 2021, I joined Controller Ron Galperin and leaders like Lillibeth Navarro of Communities Actively Living Independent and Free as an audit was released outlining the decades-long systemic failures to adequately fix city sidewalks. The condition of our sidewalks must be remedied. As chair of the Council’s Public Works Committee, I’ve been working with nonprofit leaders and department heads to craft comprehensive policy recommendations to change these failed systems. The voices of the disability community, those with lived experience in dealing with these failures, are absolutely critical to this effort.

Particular challenges depend on the type of disability one has, and I have always been an advocate for people with disabilities ranging from cognitive or intellectual disabilities, to blindness, to physical challenges that require wheelchair use. The cuts to our public transportation system and reduced bus service affect many people living with disabilities who rely on public transportation. The lack of affordable housing is a challenge for all, but especially for those who rely on disability income to pay the rent. Additionally for folks who need at-home care or specialized services, the lack of living wages in these fields and corresponding lack of qualified staff to provide essential care are a great threat to the well-being and quality of life of people with disabilities and their families.

**3) Homelessness, Poverty, and Equity: What is your plan to address homelessness among your constituents, to work with other organizations to address the issue in the region, and to coordinate with other municipalities to create more affordable and accessible housing?**

According to the most recent LAHSA Homeless Count, the district I represent has the fewest unhoused people compared to all other City Council Districts. This means we historically get far fewer resources to deal with this crisis. But that is why I’ve worked so hard to find creative solutions to get housing open, and services expanded, in my district.

Housing solves homelessness. Even if we had all the services in the world, without housing it’s practically impossible to get substance abuse services beyond harm reduction or help for people suffering with trauma or mental health issues. Last year, I helped create as many transitional beds in my district as unsheltered people were counted in the previous homeless count through the creation of cabin communities, bridge housing, hotel conversion, and other efforts. And in 2022, we are set to open just under 200 units of PSH/affordable housing, with several more projects to open next year. This is all in addition to the thousands and thousands of market-rate units I’ve greenlit during my time on the Council in Warner Center and throughout the West Valley.

I’ve had groups show up to my house and try to intimidate my family because of some of my projects to help unhoused people. They have not, and will not, diminish my dedication to help those who are struggling and to increase housing accessibility and affordability in Los Angeles.

One size does not fit all for housing, and the unique support and accessibility needs of people with disabilities need to be an important part of the conversation. The cabin communities do include ADA-accessible units. Affordability issues in housing must be addressed to ensure long-term stable housing for people on fixed incomes.

**4) Other Priorities: What other policies that impact people with disabilities are you ready and eager to work on? What is your plan to involve your constituents with disabilities in key decision-making processes?**

I would like to build on the progress I’ve made in my first two terms on my top priorities, which are 1) public safety, 2) services and housing for the homeless/unsheltered, and 3) essential core city services, including sidewalks, streets, trees, parks, and libraries. There is so much to be done. And I am dedicated to doing the hard work ensuring that the city provides the level of municipal services the world-class city of Los Angeles deserves, in a financially responsible, equitable, and sustainable way; addressing long-standing problems of racial and economic inequity and housing affordability that are root causes of homelessness; advancing equity-focused environmental policies that improve the health and quality of life for our residents; and tackling the existential threat of climate change while ensuring a just transition for affected workers. These are all priorities for me. The way I see it, improving public safety means everything from Emergency Preparedness and helping our neighborhoods survive the next earthquake or wildfire to creating trained, community-led, unarmed crisis response teams because not every 911 call is best handled by someone with a badge and a gun. I’m dedicated to devising solutions to our seemingly intractable problems and measurably improving the lives of the people of my community.

As stated in my answer to question two, ensuring that the voices of the disability community are included in each of these efforts is very important to me. Depending on the disability, things like having to communicate with 911 operators about an emergency can have elevated challenges and it’s important to incorporate training and resources to those operators to help. I will continue to shine a light on these realities and try to improve accessibility for all Angelenos.