**Question 1: What policies and actions do you support to reduce the stigmas of people with disabilities that are barriers to employment, independence, and equality?**

**Answer:**I whole-heartedly support the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its four goals of equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. This past year, the House of Representatives passed the mis-named ADA Education and Reform Act (H.R. 620), which, if passed, would have gutted title III of the ADA, and removed the incentives for those providing services to the general public to make those services accessible for people with disabilities. I joined with Sen. Tammy Duckworth and 41 other Senators to inform Senate leadership to not bring H.R. 620 to the Senate for a vote and said that I would work to block any effort to pass the bill. While employment, education, health care, and other key policies are critical to reaching the goals of the ADA, protecting the civil rights of people with disabilities is primary and the House bill took direct aim at the rights of people with disabilities.

More specifically, I have focused on making economic self-sufficiency a key to my disability policy work. I was the primary Senate author of the Stephen Beck A Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act in 2014, making it possible for people who acquire their disability before age 26 to open a savings account that allows them to save up to $15,000 a year up to a total of $100,000 and not lose their federal disability benefits. Since its passage, 39 states have created ABLE account programs, making it possible for people with disabilities to save for education expenses, begin small businesses, put away money for a car, or purchase a home. I introduced an amendment to ABLE (S. 816, the ABLE Financial Planning Act) that was passed in 2017, that allows for those with college 529 savings accounts to roll-over those funds into an ABLE account. I have also offered an amendment (S. 817, the ABLE Age Adjustment Act) that would expand ABLE eligibility to those acquiring their disability prior to 46 years of age.

I am also one of three original co-sponsors of the Disability Integration Act (S. 910), which would ensure that those with disabilities have both the right and supports necessary to live in community settings of their choice. The 1965 Social Security Amendments that created the Medicaid program, which support millions of people with disabilities who need long-term services, guarantee support for those needing institutional care but does not guarantee community-based supports. The Disability Integration Act would make it possible for people with disabilities to have equal access to community-based supports and services, and the opportunities that come with living among their families, friends, and peers.

**Question 2: What is your record on improving the lives of people with disabilities, specifically in enabling people with disabilities to have jobs, careers or start their own businesses?**

**Answer:**Being able to save money while working, purchase a vehicle, or live near a job, is critical to being employed. The ABLE act makes it possible for people with disabilities to do all those things. In addition, this year, on the 28th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, I introduced the Disability Employment Incentive Act (S. 3260), that provides incentive to businesses to hire people with disabilities and make their businesses, including the on-line businesses, more accessible to people with disabilities. Under this legislation, business owners could receive up to a $5,000 tax credit for hiring a person with a disability. They could also receive up to a $30,000 tax credit for making their place of work more accessible to people with disabilities. Small businesses would get a tax credit, too, for expenses related to accommodations to employ a person with a disability, such as specialized software, an adaptive chair, or any other expense that makes it possible for a person with a disability to work in their company.

I am also the author of the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (POWADA, S. 443). As workers age and develop disabilities, they can experience discrimination and unfair treatment from employers. While we need to focus on the rights of all workers with disabilities, those who are older often have a more difficult time being hired or retaining their jobs. POWADA would support older workers, including those with disabilities, by ensuring employers don’t discriminate against them.

**Question 3: Do you have specific strategies for youth employment for people with disabilities? For example, what are your thoughts on apprenticeships for youth with disabilities?**

**Answer:**In 2014, I was a primary sponsor and worked to pass the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). That law focuses on young people with disabilities, providing them with the information and skills necessary to help them move from school to the workforce. The law focuses on providing young people with disabilities with internships, part-time work, summer jobs, and volunteer opportunities to gain work experience. It also provides for counseling for the student and their family, so they understand how work will affect their disability benefits. The law also requires state vocational rehabilitation programs to spend at least fifteen percent of their budget on young people with disabilities. These efforts are already increasing the number of young people with disabilities finding and retaining work.

**Question 4: The jobs of the future will largely require post-secondary education. However, on average only 65 percent of students with disabilities complete high school and only seven percent complete college. What policies do you support to enable students with disabilities, including those from historically marginalized communities and backgrounds, to receive the diagnosis, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan and accommodations/services they need to succeed in school and be prepared for competitive employment?**

**Answer:**Ensuring that postsecondary programs support students with disabilities is essential for their continued education. I am the primary author of the RISE (Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower) Act (S. 1295), which will make it easier for a student with a disability leaving K-12 education and moving to postsecondary education. It requires postsecondary programs to provide accommodations for students with disabilities by accepting K-12 disability documentation.

I am also the author of the Higher Education Mental Health Act (S. 3106). Thousands of postsecondary students with mental health disabilities experience discrimination and barriers to continuing their education. This bill would create a set of best practices to support students with mental health disabilities to ensure they have the opportunity to continue their education with the support they need.

**Question 5: Today there are more than 750,000 people with disabilities behind bars in our nation. Most of them are functionally illiterate and 95 percent of them will eventually be released. What are your views to ensure that individuals with disabilities who are incarcerated gain the skills and mental health supports that will enable them to be successful when they leave incarceration?**

**Answer:**With the high incidence of disability among incarcerated individuals, we need to ensure that on-going education and job skill development is available to individuals to increase the likelihood of reintegrating into our communities. For those under 21 who have disabilities, we need to ensure special education services are available in prison and jail settings to address their disabilities and provide education. For those over 21 we need to link vocational rehabilitation services to those individuals and ensure they are receiving the skills training necessary, in the format in which they can learn, to be able to attain a job when they finish their sentences.

**Question 6: People with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of crime as those without disabilities. This includes the fact that both children and adults with disabilities are more likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault. They are also far more likely to suffer from police violence, partially because manifestations of disability can be misunderstood. How would you address these issues?**

**Answer:**Protecting individuals from sexual assault and abuse has been a long-term effort of mine. Those with disabilities are disproportionately targeted for abuse and assault. This year I introduced the SECuRE Act (the Safe Equitable Campus Resources and Education Act, S. 2530), which requires colleges and universities to provide accessible information to students, employees, and visitors regarding preventing sexual assault on their campuses. It also requires that all hearings and meetings related to sexual assault and abuse be accessible to all people with disabilities, including those who are deaf or have an intellectual disability. Finally, the information required under the Clery Act related to reporting about sexual assault on campuses, must be available to the general public in an accessible format and campus security and administrators must be educated about the needs of people with disabilities who have been assaulted and provide support and information to them in accessible formats.

**Question 7: How would you ensure that people with disabilities have access to healthcare and the benefits they need while enabling them with opportunities to work to the best of their capacities without losing the supports they need to live?**

**Answer:**I spent much of 2017, and continue in 2018, to protect access to Medicaid for people with disabilities and their families. Medicaid is the single largest payer for long-term services and supports and for employment support for people with disabilities. The proposals that have been offered by the House of Representatives and some of my Senate colleagues would drastically reduce both the available funds for Medicaid and access to Medicaid for some Americans. This fight includes protecting the requirement that health insurers not discriminate against those with pre-existing conditions. The CDC estimated in a late August report that 61 million American adults have a disability. All of those Americans have a pre-existing condition. They all must have access to the health care they need to be full participants in our communities. A key policy that has made health care available to a large number of Pennsylvanians and many millions of other Americans across the nation, is Medicaid expansion. I, along with many of my colleagues, will continue to protect access to Medicaid so that people with disabilities can continue to have high quality health care that makes it possible for them to live and work in their communities.

**Question 8: What are your thoughts on ensuring that people with disabilities have the option to live in their homes instead of institutions and still have the community attendant supports they need to live?**

**Answer:**As noted above, I am an original co-sponsor of the Disability Integration Act (DIA), which would amend the 1965 Social Security Amendments Act to make home and community-based services a standard service of Medicaid instead of a waiver option. Research clearly shows that individuals with disabilities and those who are aging greatly prefer to live in their own homes and apartments, in a familiar community, and that physical and mental health outcomes are far better for those who live in their own homes. Passage of the DIA would remove the Medicaid bias to provide services in institutional settings and eliminate the waiting list for home and community based long term services and supports that exist in many states.

**Question 9: How would you advance innovations (i.e., assistive technologies, devices) that can help people with disabilities become more successfully employed, productive and independent?**

**Answer:**I have introduced or have co-sponsored a series of bills during this Congressional session that will make it easier for people with disabilities to have access to the technology they need to work in competitive jobs and live in their communities. The Medical Device Safety Monitoring Act (S. 1069) would ensure that medical devices are safe and effective, and that consumer know about their safety records. I co-sponsored the Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act (S. 2559), a bipartisan effort to pass the treaty that would make intellectual property more accessible for people who are blind, visually impaired, or have reading disabilities. The treaty has been approved by Congress and is waiting for the President’s signature. I also co-sponsored the Access Technology Affordability Act (S. 732) with Sen. Boozman of Arkansas, which will provide a tax credit to those needing technology to assist them to see, use a computer, and continue in their jobs. Finally, I have led the effort to expand funding for the Assistive Technology Programs in each state. Those programs make information, device lending, device recycling, and device funding available for those in need to assistive technology.

**Question 10: Are your office, website, and events accessible to people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**Answer:**We work to make both our physical and on-line presence accessible to all. Our Washington, DC Senate office and state offices are in buildings that are accessible. We have protocols for public meetings to ensure the physical arrangement of the space is accessible. We also include with public meeting notices an e-mail address to request accommodations, including American Sign Language and other communication needs. On-line, we work to make posted documents screen readable, provide photo descriptions, and caption videos. We actively recruit potential employees with disabilities and have worked with the Senate Democratic Diversity office to create a database of people with disabilities interested in working in Senate offices both in Washington, DC and in the state offices.