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

**Answer:**My first job out of college was teaching special needs kids in a public elementary school, so I’ve seen firsthand how important it is to be able to live a life of independence and dignity. I will always stand up for the policies that help make that possible.

First off, individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to reach their full potential in competitive and integrated employment settings, and they should receive fair wages for their work. For these reasons, I have worked to end the subminimum wage, which makes it perfectly legal for an employer to pay a worker with a disability less than a worker without a disability for doing the same job, and I have pressured the Department of Labor to more aggressively crack down on the abuse of 14(c) certificates. This policy enforces harmful and inaccurate stigmas, and we should phase it out in a responsible way.

Americans with disabilities also have a right to student loan relief. I’ve introduced legislation to prohibit the Treasury Department from forcing borrowers who are severely disabled from paying taxes on student loans that have been canceled, which would save them thousands of dollars. We need to make it easier, not harder for students with disabilities to receive the benefits they are due.

**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:**I have always believed in the principle of equal pay for equal work, but today, it is perfectly legal for an employer to hire workers with disabilities and pay them below what they pay workers without disabilities for doing the same work. They can even apply for permission to pay workers with disabilities below the federal minimum wage. This is absolutely shameful, and I’ve called on the Department of Labor to crack down on employers that abuse that abuse this policy.

I’ve also worked to help individuals with disabilities build financial security, including by supporting the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act to allow individuals with disabilities to save and pay for disability-related expenses. And I’ve pushed to expand the ABLE Act to benefit older individuals and allow for higher contribution limits, and to raise the outdated asset and income limits for Americans who receive benefits like Social Security Income, which prevent some individuals with disabilities from earning and saving money for no good reason.

Accessible public transportation also ensures that workers with disabilities can safely commute to work. I helped to secure over $9 million in federal grants to make vital improvements to the dock at the Hingham Ferry Terminal in Massachusetts, bringing the dock into full ADA compliance and ensuring that it is accessible to all riders. I also pushed for a $16 million increase in funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to ensure that it has the resources it needs to fulfill its mission.

**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:**We need to do everything we can to ensure that all students, regardless of means or background, have access to career training that will provide a path to a good-paying job and a middle-class lifestyle. That’s why ​I introduced and passed the Free Career and Technical Education for High School Students Act in order to direct federal funding streams toward reducing or eliminating out-of-pocket costs associated with Career and Technical Education programs for high school students, including students with disabilities. ​If classes that prepare high school students for college are free, then career training classes that prepare students to enter the workforce should also be free. I have also introduced bipartisan legislation that would expand education savings accounts to cover apprentices’ out-of-pocket costs, such as for equipment and books.

**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:**As a former teacher of special needs students, I know how important it is for our public education system to create opportunities for all kids, including students with disabilities. That’s why I passed an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization to ensure that students with disabilities are able to use assistive technology to access assessments. It’s also why I introduced the bipartisan AIM HIGH Act to create guidelines for accessible instructional materials on college campuses, which is a problem for far too many students with disabilities today. I recognize that many students face special obstacles to their education, and I will always stand up for programs that help to level the playing field.

**Question 5: Today there are more than 750,000 people with disabilities behind bars in our nation. More than 60 percent 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:**There is a growing consensus among Americans that our criminal justice system is deeply broken and in need of real, drastic change. I fundamentally believe that we need to do our best to make sure that people who are incarcerated are treated with basic dignity and respect. These individuals should have a chance to emerge from their incarceration as intact human beings who are ready to come back to their communities and make a real contribution. That’s why I led appropriations letters to request robust funding for medication-assisted treatment for individuals with substance use disorders in federal prisons, state correctional facilities, and post-correctional reentry programs. I also joined Senator Markey in requesting a GAO study of how substance use disorders are addressed by the Bureau of Prisons and state correctional facilities.

**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:**People with disabilities deserve to live their lives free from sexual violence.  As a United States Senator, it’s my responsibility to promote policies that reduce rates of rape and sexual assault, provide survivors with the resources they need, and hold perpetrators accountable.  I have consistently supported federal programs, including those authorized by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and the Violence Against Women Act, that support domestic violence and sexual assault victims and their families. And I’ve introduced legislation that would increase the transparency of workplace harassment and discrimination–including sexual harassment and discrimination against people with disabilities.

**Question 7: How would you ensure that people with disabilities have access to health care 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:**Health care is a right, and I believe that everyone deserves access to affordable, high-quality health care. Medicare and Medicaid are lifelines for millions of people who rely on these programs for essential health coverage and economic security, especially people with disabilities and long-term care needs. I will fight to preserve and strengthen these programs, and I won’t back down when it comes to making sure Medicare and Medicaid are there for those who need it.

I’ve also reached across the aisle to craft and pass bipartisan legislation guaranteeing affordable, over-the-counter hearing aids for those with mild to moderate hearing loss. And I introduced the Audiology Patient Choice Act, a bipartisan bill that ensures that people with disabilities on Medicare have access to a full range of hearing and balance health care services provided by licensed audiologists.

After shrinking budgets forced the Social Security Administration to cut thousands of jobs and close over 60 offices, leading to outrageously long wait times that left many Americans with disabilities struggling to get their benefits, I also fought to get a $480 million increase for the SSA – the first increase to its operating budget in almost a decade. Finally, I am deeply committed to both protecting and expanding Social Security benefits for Americans with disabilities, which have not nearly kept up with the rising costs of health care, housing, food, and energy.

**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:**Last month, I introduced legislation to confront America’s housing crisis. The American Housing and Economic Mobility Act would result in over 3 million new low- and moderate-income housing units, bringing rents down for people with disabilities and ensuring that they can afford to live in the communities that they call home. The bill would also expand the Fair Housing Act to prohibit discrimination against people for gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status or source of income, including government assistance or housing vouchers.   I’ve also cosponsored the Disability Integration Act to require insurance providers that cover long-term supports and services to allow individuals to access home and community-based services and lead an independent life.

**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:**Over the past fifty years, the American system of medical innovation has transformed the health of literally billions of people around the world. It didn’t just appear overnight as if by magic – it is the end result of generations of huge taxpayer investments in the National Institutes of Health. That’s why I’ve fought tooth and nail against President Trump’s proposal to cut nearly 20% of the NIH budget – the largest cut to the institution since its founding. I’ve also introduced the National Biomedical Research Act and the Medical Innovation Act to restore our investments in the NIH’s cutting-edge scientific research and bring us closer to critical health care breakthroughs.

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

**Answer:**We work hard to ensure that all aspects of our campaign are accessible to people with disabilities. We operate 23 field offices across Massachusetts, and the first thing we do when evaluating a new space is make sure that it is ADA compliant. We will not sign a lease if a space is not accessible, and we do the same when we identify venues for our public events. It’s not negotiable.

When planning town hall events, we ask attendees about any accessibility requirements in the RSVP form and reach out to individuals directly to confirm what they need. At all events, we reserve seats for people with disabilities and make sure they are able to enter the event first without waiting in line. We also do our best to accommodate and book interpreters as soon as we get requests for ASL interpretation. And when I’m speaking from a raised stage with stairs, I make a point to always come down first to greet and take photos with attendees who are unable to climb the stairs.

My campaign also makes it a priority to offer phone banks alongside any canvasses so that people of all mobilities can participate. All of the photographs on my campaign website have alt-text, and all our video content includes captions for those who need it.