**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:**The vision I hold for my administration and the future of Colorado is one that will be inclusive and mindful of the needs, as well as the barriers, that persons with disabilities face every day. I have long advocated for meaningful initiatives that support people with disabilities in reaching their full potential in their lives, passions, and careers.

At the beginning of my career I started two nonprofits: TechStars and Patriot Bootcamp. TechStars supports those in underrepresented communities in starting their own tech startups. Likewise, Patriot Bootcamp supports fledgling entrepreneurs start their own companies. Patriot Bootcamp specifically works with veterans and their families, many of whom live with a disability.

In Congress, I have cosponsored legislation that would help to bust stigma surrounding disabilities, while also working to expand access to career and life opportunities for people with disabilities. Some of the more recent pieces of legislation that I have cosponsored are the Disability Integration Act of 2017 (H.R. 2472, 115th Congress), a resolution to amend the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 to provide eligibility under the assistive technology program for farmers with disabilities to veterans with disabilities and their families (H.R. 5448, 115th Congress), the IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R. 2902, 115th Congress), and Improving the Quality of Disability Decisions Act of 2017 (H.R. 3386, 115th Congress).

I believe that if we work together to eliminate barriers to employment, independence, and equality for people with disabilities, we will also be working to eliminate the destructive stigmas against peoples with disabilities, all while ensuring that every Coloradan, no matter who they are, can reach their full potential at work and at life.

**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’ve found that the most meaningful type of work is work for others. I spent years building businesses, but there was nothing quite like building nonprofits that help folks from underrepresented communities build their own companies.

From TechStars to Patriot Bootcamp, I’ve had the privilege of working with people from all walks of life, from all across our country. At TechStars, we worked with aspiring entrepreneurs who faced limitations in life that kept them from reaching their true potential. Whether the limitations came from their socio-economic status or a physical disability, I fought hard to make sure they had the resources they needed to break barriers and find the success they deserved.

When I started Patriot Bootcamp I was determined to extend the same entrepreneurial opportunity to veterans and their families as I had found in my earlier years. Many of those whom we worked with at Patriot Bootcamp were disabled veterans. One thing that was abundantly clear from the beginning was that no amount of physical limitation could hold back their aspirations. It was an honor to work with these veterans and their families, again breaking down the barriers, to find the entrepreneurial success that they worked hard for and deserved.

My 10 years in Congress have been spent working on many issues and with many people with all sorts of life experiences. When it came to working with the persons with disabilities community, there were many opportunities to make progress, and I am proud of the many legislative initiatives that I was able to be a part of.

I’ve been a cosponsor on the Disability Integrations Act of 2017 (H.R. 2427, 115th Congress), the Workplace Choice and Flexibility for Individuals with Disabilities Act (H.R. 5680, 115th Congress), and another bill to amend the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 to provide eligibility under the assistive technology program for farmers with disabilities to veterans with disabilities and their families (H.R. 5448, 115th Congress).

**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:**First, I think it is important for our state to prioritize our education system. It is clear to most that many schools in Colorado just don’t have the necessary resources to meet the needs of every student.

When I was on the State Board of Education I saw first-hand the issues that Colorado schools were facing. That’s why I got to work and started two public schools for students who needed unique support to succeed. I started the New America school for young immigrants, so they could learn English while still working through the curriculum for their grade level. I also started the Urban Learning Academy for at-risk in Denver.

What I learned from all of this is that many students have limitations placed on them that they cannot control. I also learned that if our educational system can meet these students where they are, we can help them discover futures and careers of success.

To that end, I think that young people with disabilities can and should have the same academic and career prospects as any other student. The first step toward making sure that every student in this community gets the support they need to succeed includes providing our educational system with the resources it needs.

**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:**This is an issue that I’ve been focusing on for most of my career: working with our educational system in Colorado to find better ways to support our marginalized and underrepresented students. The fact is that students with disabilities face an uphill battle when it comes to finding the academic success that they deserve. I started several public schools, the New America Schools and the Academy of Urban Learning to help support students from underrepresented communities, so they can get the resources and support that they need to achieve their academic goals. Students who have attended the schools that I started are able to receive the specialized support that they needed to achieve their academic goals, and I am proud to share that a vast majority of these students have gone on to attend and graduate from college.

The rate at which students with disabilities face inherent academic struggles is unacceptable. Our state and educational system can and must do better to find ways to support these students so that they can realize the academic and career success that they deserve. As governor, I will work with my administration to ensure that every student, from every community, no matter their physical or cognitive abilities, has an equal opportunity for academic success. Whether through an Individualized Education Program or a 504 program, there are tools available to support these students, and as governor I want to make sure that our schools and teachers have the resources necessary to properly utilizing these programs, ensuring that every student gets the attention and support they need.

I will be prepared to work with anyone to get this done – Republicans, Democrats, or Independents. Through wise investment in our general fund, we will find the best ways to prioritize education in Colorado. By the end of my first legislative session as governor, it will be my goal to achieve universal kindergarten for every child, while also ensuring that every classroom has the resources available to support the needs of every student. Through this educational reprioritization we can ensure that students with disabilities get a strong, early start toward academic success, and that as they move through Colorado’s educational system, they are able to learn and thrive in an academic environment that meets their individual needs.

**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:**The incarceration system is simply not focused enough on reducing the prison population and rehabilitation of inmates. And, too often, people are placed in prison for mental health issues when what they really need is treatment and assistance. This must change, and will lead on as governor.

I will begin zeroing out the funding for private prisons in our state budget, and invest that money in rehabilitation programs and workforce development programs to help inmates once they are released back into society. If we’re able to take the funding given to a for-profit corporation and instead focus on the needs and rehabilitation of inmates, we will be in a better position to work with and support people with disabilities who are incarcerated.

**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 are far more likely to suffer from police violence, partially because manifestations of disability can be misunderstood. How would you address these issues?**

**Answer:**Our state and our criminal justice system can do better by people with disabilities. I’ve worked hard in Congress to achieve the necessary reforms so that people with disabilities are unduly incarcerated or faced with excessive force by members of law enforcement.

I think that more can be done to solve this issue, and as governor I will make sure that we bring everyone to the table to find the best solutions. We can prioritize funding within our criminal justice system so that our law enforcement officers have the comprehensive training they need to react appropriately in the field.

**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:**Health care is a human right and no one who relies on Medicaid should have to worry about losing the coverage they need to survive because their income increases.

No matter the health care plan a Coloradan relies on, they shouldn’t be at risk of losing it due to an preexisting condition, be outpriced because of where they live, or face a loss of coverage or quality in any way. As governor, ​I will take immediate action to lower of health care, expand access, and improve quality. We’re going to use every tool available to us to save money not only for consumers but also for small businesses. We’re going to take immediate action to lower prescription drug costs by requiring big pharmaceutical companies to justify price increases and to implement pricing transparency. We will fight to reduce premiums by creating a reinsurance program that will help to offset high-cost areas, and we will implement important pricing reforms to Medicaid that ensure we eliminate inefficiencies and are spending scarce resources on care. And, I’m ready to partner with patient advocates, the business community, and our neighboring states to build a health care system that lowers costs, maximizes our ability to negotiate prescription drug rates, and saves money for small businesses.

**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:**The cost of living in Colorado has significantly increased, and as governor I will be focused on tackling this issue so Coloradans can stay in the communities that they call home. I believe that people with disabilities deserve the right to stay in their homes and communities, and not be priced out of their living situations. I recognize the complexity associated with solving this issue, but I also believe that it’s the job of the governor to work with large employers and cities and towns to address the lack of affordable and accessible housing.

It’s the governor’s job to lead and seize creative opportunities. For example, while in Congress I led federal collaboration with local mountain communities to build nearly 400 affordable housing units by transferring land from the Forest Service to the county. Furthermore, as governor I will work with the State Land Board to identify opportunities to develop affordable housing units at a discounted rate on rundown or vacant lots, pursue zoning laws that promote mixed-income and multi-family housing, and consider way to ensure that builders include more accessible housing in their building plans.

**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:**No matter who you are, where you’re from, or what you’ve experienced in life, Colorado should be a place where you can work hard and find success. The first step toward ensuring that our state can be a launching pad for success for everyone will be to make sure that our transportation infrastructure is robust enough to support our 21st century needs. My transportation plan calls for more affordable public transportation options so that geography or physical limitations won’t keep someone from reaching the grocery store, their doctor, or their loved ones.

Colorado has long stood out as an innovative state. We have world-class universities and cutting-edge companies that push the limits of technology every day. Right here at home, we can do more to invest in this technological innovation, such as self-driving cars, to help Coloradans — especially those with a disability — to live a better life in the 21st century.

In our state’s effort to lead on innovative technology production, we must make the protection of net neutrality and the expansion of rural broadband a priority. While Washington fails Colorado on these issues, it will be up to the next governor to step up to secure this protection and advance the roll out of high-speed broadband to every community, and I know that I will be that governor if the people of Colorado choose to elect me.

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

**Answer:**Our campaign maintains a strong focus on ensuring that our events and offices are accessible to people with disabilities. Every single one of our eleven field offices are accessible to people with disabilities. Our campaign gladly welcomes the support from every individual, no matter their abilities. Many folks want to support the campaign, but aren’t able to knock doors. That’s why every field office facilitates alternative options such as phone banking (from home or in one of our offices) and letter writing to local papers to share the message of our campaign. When we schedule our events, we dedicate a great amount of focus to ensuring that they are accessible to people with disabilities, and I’m proud to report that most of our events have been made accessible to people with disabilities.