**EDUCATION & SKILLS: What is your plan for ensuring that all students with disabilities, including English Language Learners, receive a quality and appropriate education to acquire critical and marketable skills?**

Every child should have access to high-quality and equitable education opportunities. This ideal is at the heart of America’s public education system and we must always strive to fully meet its promise. In 1975, Congress passed what is now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), guaranteeing every child who experiences a disability with access to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Because of this, my son Ben — who experiences severe cerebral palsy — was able to attend our local public school, graduating from high school in 2006 alongside his peers. Despite this progress, I know that families often feel like their children are left behind and I am committed to always working to improve our public education system so that every child gets what they need to thrive.

And we know that some students who experience disabilities have faced additional barriers to learning during the pandemic, losing access to the supports they need to thrive. That is why I was glad to help secure IDEA funding in the American Rescue Plan — the first stimulus package in American history to include this funding.

Under the IDEA, Congress committed to paying 40 percent of the cost of special education — a promise that has not been met. In the Senate, I am pushing to increase funding for IDEA so that we finally meet our funding obligations, including by cosponsoring the IDEA Full Funding Act. I also recently introduced a bill to increase funding for early childhood programs under IDEA so that infants and toddlers get the support that they need to set them up for success. I am also committed to expanding opportunities for young people to explore career and higher education opportunities when they are in middle and high school — including expanding career and technical education and early college opportunities. I am also proud to have introduced the bipartisan RISE Act, which would ease the burden of transitioning to college life for students who experience disabilities and the Safe Equitable Campus Resources and Education (SECuRE) Act, which will ensure that the needs of people who experience disabilities are included in campus planning and response to incidents of sexual assault.

**EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP: If elected, what will you do to advance opportunities for people with disabilities who want to work and earn an income, just like anyone else? How will you support employers, large and small, to recruit and hire workers with disabilities? How will you promote evidence-based policies and best practices leading to meaningful careers as well as disability entrepreneurship opportunities?**

Our society and our economy are stronger when we include the talents of all people. I have long supported competitive integrated employment for workers with disabilities and as Governor of New Hampshire, I signed a bill to outlaw the payment of subminimum wages — a bill that had bipartisan support and the backing of the business community. I believe that we must end this practice nationally, including by funding transition supports and services to workers currently employed in subminimum wage settings. I also support additional funding to expand supported employment and customized employment opportunities for workers with disabilities. We also must increase access to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) by providing support for caregivers, worker coaches, and direct support professionals who provide essential one-on-one support in the workplace.

As businesses recover following the pandemic, and in many cases struggle to attract and retain workers, there is an opportunity to increase employment opportunities for people who experience disabilities. I support providing tax incentives to employers who hire workers with disabilities. The government can also play a key role in sharing best practices for employers so that they understand how to best match workers with disabilities to open positions and tailor job tasks and responsibilities to match their skills and abilities.

I will also continue to strongly support entrepreneurial development programs at the Small Business Administration, including those that focus on providing resources to disadvantaged entrepreneurs, including people who experience disabilities. I will also continue to support efforts to increase access to capital and lower other barriers faced by disadvantaged entrepreneurs, such as student loan debt relief.

**ACCESS & 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?**

The rights and interests of people who experience disabilities must be considered across policy making. During my campaigns and as a State Senator, Governor, US Senator, I have always strived to hear from as many perspectives as possible when crafting my platform, policy priorities, and legislation. In my Senate office, I have a Senior Policy Advisor who handles issues related to disability inclusion. Having a designated staff member to prioritize disability issues and collaborate across portfolios helps to ensure that these issues remain at the forefront of my work. I also have strong relationships with a number of advocacy organizations at the state and national level who represent the interests of people with disabilities. And both in my official office and on my re-election campaign, I have made it a priority to hire individuals who experience disabilities at every level.

Ensuring that public events are accessible is a priority. Over the last two years, the pandemic has resulted in more virtual and hybrid events, which have gotten people involved who in the past may have struggled to attend an in-person event. I plan to continue to use technology when possible to offer virtual attendance options going forward.

**FIGHTING STIGMAS: If elected, what will be your plan to fight stigmas, highlight the disability community, and promote higher expectations for success?**

I was drawn to public service to ensure that people, like my son Ben who experiences severe disabilities, are fully included in our country’s shared success. Throughout my career, I have kept the goal of full inclusion for all at the forefront of my work. I firmly believe that when we bring more people in from the margins, everyone is stronger.

In addition to advocating for policy changes, we also must raise awareness about why inclusion is important, and how it benefits everyone. I always use the example of sidewalk curb cut-outs. While these are required by law to ensure that people using wheelchairs are able to navigate their communities, they also make it easier for families with strollers and seniors with mobility issues. The same thing is true when we make our education system more accessible and our workplaces more responsive to match individual worker skills and strengths. People’s differences — including disabilities — make our communities stronger, and our communities should be built to include and support them.

**OTHER KEY ISSUES: What additional policies and priorities, other than those already discussed above, do you plan to focus on to improve the lives of people with disabilities? If you have yet to develop them, what is your plan to learn about disability issues?**

At the heart of inclusion is the right and ability to vote independently. I am proud to support the Freedom to Vote Act which would ensure voting materials and polling locations are accessible and expand absentee voting. In New Hampshire, voters who are visually impaired can now vote completely independently using technology that allows them to independently mark their ballot. This work to make voting more accessible is essential to keeping our democracy strong.

I also support expanding accessible housing options and transportation systems. People who experience disabilities should have access to affordable, stable housing options where they can live independently with people with and without disabilities and receive the support that they need to be fully included in the community. We also need to expand accessible transportation options, particularly in rural regions.

I am aware that people with disabilities are too often left out and I am committed to always making these issues a priority. I can’t promise that we’ll always be successful, but each and every day I will push to make changes that improve the lives of people with disabilities every day.