**QUESTION 1: Do you have designated advisors and clear processes for making decisions on disability issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**In regards to disability related issues, our campaign is working with Dylan McDonnell, who sits on the Governor’s Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities and Program Manager at Columbus Community Center, which employs people with disabilities and contracts with the state. Furthermore, I have reached out to the Disability Caucus of the Utah Democratic Party on issues related to items such as Medicaid expansion in Utah. I have also reached out and received information on issues such as schools for the deaf and blind.

As the former CEO of CHG Healthcare Services, the nation’s largest staffing company of doctors and nurses, I am aware of the importance of ensuring that these individuals have quality health care providers. Also, as owner, I ensured that people with disabilities could advance and grow within the company.

**QUESTION 2: Is your campaign accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**As part of our web hosting and publishing process, we worked to ensure that all of our documents are accessible to those that use screen readers. For example, though we rarely rely on just graphics to convey a point (say, an infographic), when we do, we ensure that the information is also available in print form so that the information is easily accessible to the blind and those who use screen readers. Our videos provide a closed captioned option and are reviewed for accuracy when publishing.

Our campaign has committed to only hold events in ADA accessible venues. we have a dedicated events coordinator who, as part of her duties, ensures that events are accessible to all members of the public. We have not received specific requests for ASL interpreters or alternative formats for materials, however, we are prepared to provide them upon request.

**QUESTION 3: Do you have a proven record on improving or a plan to improve the lives of people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**At CHG Healthcare Services one of our core principals, and one of the main reasons I feel we were so successful as a corporation, was that we put our employees first. Not only does this philosophy produce and maintain quality employees, it was just the right thing to do. This philosophy, naturally, extended to people of all abilities. The company would actively encourage the internal promotion of all of its employees, including those with disabilities, to ensure that they can live healthy and productive lives both inside and outside of the office. With more than 2,000 employees and over 20 years, CHG has strove to emulate the principles of the ADA.  Every job, every office, every policy was ADA compliant and we would seek opportunities to promote employees based off results, not disability status.

I also sit on the board of the Utah chapter of the ACLU, where we have taken up various causes to ensure that all are treated equally under the law, and has included people with disabilities.

As governor, I feel that the single biggest thing I could achieve to help people with disabilities succeed is to pass comprehensive Medicaid expansion in the state. Utah has a disgraceful recent history when it comes to “expansion” of health care, and it is time to take real action by actually allowing Medicaid funds that could be potentially released to the state under Medicaid expansion to actually flow into the state and help her citizens.

I also fully support various federal laws such as the ADA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Help America Vote Act, hate crimes legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act, and the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act. As governor I will look and fight for opportunities to expand Utah law beyond federal minimums. For example, the Utah Republican Party had issues within their own caucus this past year that prevented some of their members to literally stand and be counted on various election decisions – this is unacceptable. Furthermore, though Utah has made some inroads into nondiscrimination legislation, more work needs to be done to ensure that all members of the community have equal access to essential things such as housing and employment.

**QUESTION 4: Do you have a plan/commitment to reduce the stigmas about people with disabilities that are barriers to employment, independence and equality? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**As governor, I will give full support to policies and practices both inside and outside of government that helps reduce stigmas associated with people with disabilities.

First and foremost, various application processes need to be streamlined within Utah government. The bureaucracy can be daunting for anyone, and for those with a disability, it can pose a serious barrier to ensuring that people have access to the resources they need. I also feel that expanding the definition of “disability” in state law to include chronic homelessness could help capture populations that are not currently being served in the state.

Here in Utah, we also have the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR). This department needs to have a larger dedicated budget instead of living off of single infusions. Furthermore, this year USOR was placed under the umbrella of Department of Workforce Services (DWS), despite objection by most of the disability community.  Additionally the legislature requested this move be completed within six months, unlike other states which saw their reorganizations take place over 2-3 years. This action provided stress and instability in a community that least needs it.  One option the legislature had and I support was to make USOR a separate Department.  By making USOR directly accountable to the Governor it provides that stability in the winds of partisanship.

**QUESTION 5: Do you have a proven record on enabling, or a plan to enable, people with disabilities to have jobs, careers and to start their own businesses? Do you have specific strategies for youth employment for people with disabilities and/or sector strategies such as jobs and careers in STEM, hospitality, healthcare and elder care? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I have always sought to advocate for those who may not be able to advocate for themselves.  Whether barriers be physical, mental, emotional, or any other kind I recognized those barriers often would provide a unique perspective that I very much appreciated. I tried to emulated those values throughout my business practices.

When elected, I will look in to establishing a state program modeled after SourceAmerica and AbilityOne including a call for all state-run agencies to ensure at a minimum 7% of their workforce are people with disabilities.

In regards to jobs and careers in STEM I would work with non-profit agencies to increase funding to autism related job training programs. 

**QUESTION  6: Do you have a plan to enable students with disabilities, including those from historically marginalized communities and backgrounds, to receive the diagnosis, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and accommodations/services they need to succeed in school and be prepared for competitive employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Early diagnosis of an individual with a disability is vital to their long-term success.  Not only does it allow for them to be placed on a list to eventually receive disability, which operates on a “first come, first serve” basis per disability status, but it also allows for any necessary training to take place. IEPs are obviously vital to the success of any individual after diagnosis, and therefore I feel that long-term funding for qualified Direct Support Professional and/or support coordinator would allow for consistency.

I believe every school-age child should have the opportunity to be diagnosed if there is reason to suspect a disability.  This early investment will help the parents and provide support for them and, upon diagnosis, these parents should be able to automatically enroll children in programs so that both parent and child are able to get the support and advice they need, working with school councilors.

**QUESTION  7: Do you have a plan to reform the benefits system (Medicaid, Medicaid buyin) to enable people with disabilities to work to the best of their capacities without losing supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**People with disabilities are entitled to Medicare as a financial support and income should not affect the ability to receiving of it – and I am concerned that some individuals with disabilities don’t work to their full potential in fear of losing their Medicaid.  This isn’t right, if someone is willing and able to work, they should be able to do so without fear of losing their benefits.  Allowing them to work to their potential will increase their independence and allow for greater personal growth.

**QUESTION 8: Do you have a plan to ensure people with disabilities are eligible for affordable health insurance regardless of preexisting conditions? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I support the Affordable Care Act, its support of preexisting conditions, and the subsequent expansion of Medicaid in Utah. As governor, I will call upon the legislature do all that it can expand health care so that critical equipment, such as wheelchairs, can either be partially or fully subsidized.

**QUESTION 9: Do you have a plan to provide home and community-based services to people with disabilities who would rather live in their own homes instead of institutions, and have the community attendant supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Staffing is indeed a problem in Utah, as it no doubt is across the nation. But the state also has a strong tradition of helping all people with a hand up, not just a handout. To this end, I want to empower those with disabilities to make their own decisions and become self-sufficient. Part of this is ensuring that, whenever possible, people are able to stay in a more stable environment such as the home or a community-based center.

Of course, the job of Direct Support Professionals is a demanding one and one that is difficult to fill. However, I believe that can be found by combining the issue of chronic homeless and potentially some of the incarcerated populations into one bucket instead of three or four to help reduce administrative overhead overall, and allowing for more funding for support professionals.

This would also assist with the issue of properly identifying disabled individuals in the community in the first place. Increased cooperation under a single department would allow for those with disabilities to better match up with support professionals, allow for greater self-sufficiency, and reduce overall costs to the state. It is a win-win that, as governor, I hope we can make some real progress on.

**QUESTION 10: Do you have a plan to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive services that would prevent them from being swept up into the criminal justice system, divert individuals with disabilities who are arrested to treatment options in lieu of jail where appropriate, receive needed accommodations in the criminal justice process and while incarcerated, and offer appropriate reentry support to help individuals with disabilities leaving jails and prisons reintegrate into their communities and secure jobs? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Utah is currently in the middle of reevaluating its criminal justice system in general through reforms I largely support such as reduced or no jail time for minor offenses and an increased emphasis on rehabilitation and reintegration into society. I would like to take it one step further and provide a disability evaluation upon intake into the criminal justice system so that we can better ensure that we are only incarcerating individuals who pose a true threat to society while diverting those with physical and mental disabilities into treatment centers that will give these individuals the help and assistance they need to become constructive members of society while simultaneously achieving self-sufficiency.

For individuals who do pose a threat to society, but also happen to have a disability, we must ensure that we are not violating the individual’s 8th Amendment right regarding cruel and unusual punishment. This means greater training for officers, jail, and prison personnel.

I believe that the environment for just this sort of reform is ripe in Utah, and as governor, I would help to guide policy in just that direction.

**QUESTION 11: People with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of crime as those without disabilities. People with disabilities also are far more likely to suffer from police violence, partially because manifestations of disability can be misunderstood as defiant behavior. Do you have a plan to address these issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**It is my belief that all public servants, and especially peace officers, should receive appropriate annual de-escalation training that is certified by a national or regional program. I will call upon the Utah Department of Public Safety’s Division of Peace Officer Standards and Training to help establish and expand upon training programs that specifically deal with these situations. Larger departments that have their own training programs in the state (the Salt Lake City Police Department, for example) will be expected to go through similar annual trainings and be able to access the statewide training materials if they so choose to ensure that all officers in the state are prepared for such situations.

**QUESTION 12: Both children and adults with disabilities are more likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault. Do you have a plan to address this issue? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Utah has a shameful record when it comes to rape and sexual assault, and I feel that the state has only started to address the underlying problems that cause these crimes to happen in the first place.

First, I feel that law enforcement and the criminal justice system needs to place a greater emphasis on investigating, arresting, and convicting those who are guilty of rape and sexual assault. Sadly, according to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, only 32 percent of crimes are actually reported, of those only seven out of 100 rapes will lead to an arrest, with three being forwarded to prosecutors, and only two will spend at least a day in jail. This effectively means that 98 percent of all rapists walk free. These statistics are wholly unacceptable and the culture that allows these statistics to become a reality must be changed.

Related to this, victims need to feel safe in reporting the crime. All too often victims are afraid of reparations by the accused or society, so they prefer to remain silent on this serious topic. I feel this culture is allowed because, for the most part, perpetrators know they will not be punished for the crime. So, again, law enforcement and the criminal justice system needs to take the issue seriously, and we need to create a culture that is intolerant of rape and sexual assault so that accusers feel safe to come forward.

In the case of disabled populations, the issue is even more complex. Besides greater education regarding Adult Protective Services to the local community I feel there are three other actions that must take place. First, I feel we must reduce the total number of potential perpetrators through a change in culture, next I feel the state must provide care givers and victims the tools they need to know and understand when a rape or sexual assault has taken place, and to feel safe in coming forward with these allegations. Third, though I feel support networks should be in place for any victim of sexual assault, this fact is particularly true for the physically or mentally disabled, as they are the most vulnerable of all populations.

**QUESTION 13: Do you have a plan for veterans with disabilities facing barriers transitioning from active duty to civilian employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**The Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs has taken this issue quite seriously, and I applaud them for their continued efforts to help bring down the barriers veterans with disabilities deal with when returning home.

However, like most state agencies, the department has been expected to more with less, and this is placing a real strain on the department as more and more service members are returning home from conflicts around the globe. As governor, I would like to ensure that this department receives the support it requires to help transition this important population back into the workforce, be it through partnering with the Department of Workforce services and/or USOR, or by making direct connections with companies that offer career opportunities to those who have been harmed while protecting our nation.

**QUESTION  14: Do you have a plan for accessible, affordable, integrated housing to allow people with disabilities to live in the communities where they work or are seeking work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Communities along Utah’s urban corridor are struggling to keep up with the needs of affordable housing. Though I do feel that specific decisions should be made at the local level, this doesn’t mean that I think the state has no role to play in the issue.

I would like to see the Utah Division of Housing and Community Development play a larger role in ensuring that local communities have the resources necessary to provide affordable housing for all populations, including those with disabilities. I would work towards providing funding for service providers to increase facilities throughout the state. Ideally, these locations should be located near transportation hubs and provide easy access to jobs, hospitals, and community centers. Though this may seem like a tall order, Utah’s dense urban network provides ample opportunities.

Through the use of block grants and best practices surrounding affordable housing, I feel that the urban core (where 80% of the state’s population resides) can make great strides towards affordable, quality housing for all, including those who are disabled.

**QUESTION 15: Do you have a plan to address the lack of accessible transportation options that is a barrier to work for people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**The principal public transportation department in the state, the Utah Transit Authority (UTA), has been under fire in recent years due to questionable spending, poor bus services, and a general feeling that they are removed from the average rider.

Furthermore, the application and approval process to ride the UTA Para-transit service is overly burdensome on those who have disabilities, requiring both electronic and printed paperwork as well as emails and phone calls just to gain an appointment. This is onerous and poses a real problem for many.

Complicating the issue is that UTA is a quasi-governmental agency that is technically considered independent, but is greatly dependent on taxpayer dollars to function. This means that there is not much a governor can do to directly influence changes to this system. However, the state legislature and local governments do provide funding and board membership for the agency. As governor, I would advocate for greater transparency on the board and an increased emphasis on better transportation options in general, including services for those with disabilities.

**QUESTION 16: Do you have a plan to advance innovations (i.e., assistive technologies, devices) that can help people with disabilities become more successfully employed, productive and independent? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**I feel that there are great opportunities to be gained from our world-class institutions like the University of Utah, which has been a pioneer in various medical techniques. As governor, I will work to provide greater funds for research in areas such as assistive technologies and devices to help those with disabilities live healthy and productive lives.