**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?**

My flagship agenda is to level the playing field for ALL Marylanders. My campaign was the first to come out with a detailed and comprehensive plan with pledges on how to implement this agenda. One of the reasons I created this agenda is because I felt that no one was addressing the concerns of people who are often neglected in policies and advocating for an innovative solution. You can review my detailed plan at Franchot.com.

Our education system can be one of our greatest tools for leveling the socio-economic playing field and equipping every Marylander with the tools they need to live a fulfilling, secure life. I have several policies to ensure that students with disabilities and English Language Learners have quality education and the tools needed to meet their goals. As governor, one of my initiatives will be to pilot innovative approaches to equip high school students with real-world skills, such as a case-based curriculum that centers learning on financial literacy and other practical skills necessary for the modern economy. I also believe that paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRPs) are critical to ensure that all students have access to quality education. I will update the Maryland State Salary Schedule for a comprehensive response on how I believe that PSRPs and all other public employees should have their salaries improved so as to allow for more competitive compensation and better serve students with disabilities in the classroom.

I also believe that community school coordinators can be a vital tool for creating connectivity between community and classroom, which includes providing culturally and situationally appropriate materials to parents that creates better engagement with their students’ learning experience. Moreover, we must do a much better job of supporting our school nurses and therapists, and expanding the number of these professionals in our schools so that students have more access to and engagement from these vital service providers.

**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?**

As Governor, I am committed to creating 100,000 jobs in 100 weeks. One of the ways that I will achieve this is by creating a statewide jobs training program for ALL Marylanders so that they are well equipped with the skills necessary to work in a modern economy. As part of this initiative, I will guarantee employment in the six-week [Conservation Jobs Corp Program](https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/cjc_program.aspx) for ALL interested Marylanders under the age of 22, expand the program’s purview to include industries of the future, and facilitate placement for participants over the age of 18 in a related field with state or local agencies, or organized labor. I would also explore having a dedicated resource program for those with disabilities to compete for procurement contracts if they are business owners. Moreover, I have proposed the creation of a Secretary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to study government programs and make recommendations that can both improve the accessibility of our services, and recommend better allocations of resources to communities that do not receive their fair share. Finally, I will always welcome suggestions from RespectAbility to create more equitable opportunities that promote disability entrepreneurship opportunities.

**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?**

I believe that ALL perspectives should be a part of any decision-making process, and if elected I will create a cabinet that truly reflects the society it serves. As Comptroller, my office has conducted focus groups with members of the disability community to provide feedback on ways in which we can make our website more accessible.This is an indication of how I will work to facilitate ongoing guidance from the disability community, rather than providing an initial response and then considering my commitment fulfilled. Moreover, as part of my plan to appoint a Secretary of Diversity and Inclusion, their duties will include identifying bias when it comes to disability, and they will be tasked with working with members of the disability community to develop solutions that the private and public sectors can make to be more inclusive. Additionally, as a member of the Board of Public works, I will specifically screen for contracts to have better representation and resources for people with disabilities. I will also make sure that all State buildings are accessible.

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

I will work to make sure that my administration includes persons with disabilities to remove negative stigmas. I also recognize that as someone without a disability I will actively engage organizations such as RespectAbility to advise my administration on best practices to ensure that everyone feels included and represented.

**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?**

Public Safety: I will require that all of our emergency response teams are properly equipped with the knowledge and resources to help those who are in crisis with disabilities.

Healthcare: I am aware that Medicare/Medicaid and many insurance plans are not the most affordable and accessible for people that have to take medication for their disability. One of the goals of my administration is to expand the scope of Medicare/Medicaid to cover prescription costs for those who have disabilities and incentivize private insurance companies to provide effective and accessible resources for those with disabilities. I will also incentivize healthcare providers to adopt more inclusive resources to serve members of the disability community.

I will continuously work on staying informed on how best to advocate equity so that ALL people can share in the prosperity of the state.