**1. Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to more issues and concerns for all students and their families, but this is especially true for students with disabilities. Additionally, the gap in graduation and drop-out rates between students with and without disabilities continues to undermine their futures. For example, in the class of 2018, only 66 percent of Black students with disabilities, 71 percent of Hispanic students with disabilities, 77 percent of white students with disabilities, and 79 percent of Asian American students with disabilities completed high school. Furthermore, just seven percent of students born with a disability graduate from college. What is your plan for ensuring that all students with disabilities receive a quality and appropriate education to acquire the critical and marketable skills necessary to compete in a job-driven economy?**

Access to a high-quality public education is a right, and is fundamental to ensuring economic mobility. For too long, the federal government has failed to live up to its commitments under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and our students and schools suffer for it. We must start by fully funding IDEA, and build on that progress by securing significant expansions of programs like TRIO that help students with disabilities enroll in higher education and achieve postsecondary degrees. We must also support transitions from education to workforce by investing vocational rehabilitation services, so that everyone has the resources they need to succeed.

**2. In the economic expansion prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the national employment rate for working-age people with disabilities in America was 37.6 percent compared to 77.8 percent of people without disabilities. Further, there continues to be significant disparities in employment outcomes within the disability community, which varies from state to state. There are significant racial disparities in disability employment outcomes. 38.9 percent of working-age white people with disabilities have jobs compared to only 29.7 percent of working-age Black people with disabilities had jobs, 39.4 percent of working-age Hispanics with disabilities and 43.2 percent of working-age Asian-Americans with disabilities. The pandemic has ravaged the disability community and more than 1 million workers with disabilities have lost their jobs. If elected, what will you do to ensure that the government is removing barriers and promoting high quality, inclusive services built on evidence-based policies, practices and procedures leading to competitive, meaningful careers, which includes promoting entrepreneurial opportunities?**

During my tenure as Governor, Montana has provided pre-employment transition services to youth with disabilities, offered internships and work-based learning for people with disabilities in state government, and promoted inclusive hiring practices with Montana businesses and provided training in workplace inclusion. In the Senate, I will support full funding for vocational rehabilitation services, work to phase out the subminimum wage, encourage the Small Business Administration to include people with disabilities in its entrepreneurial training initiatives, and support funding for businesses to provide accommodations to employees with disabilities.

**3. The disability community fundamentally believes in the need to ensure “Nothing about us, without us” – real inclusion and places at decision making tables – because we know solutions that work and want to be a part of making our communities stronger. What specific measures have you taken to make your campaign accessible for, and inclusive of, people with disabilities, as every issue impacts our lives?**

On my campaign, we add captions to every pre-recorded video that we post. Issues important to Montanans with disabilities are important to me, which is why I have highlighted my priorities for inclusion and equality on my campaign’s website. The website itself is designed with numerous accessibility features, including a Userway Accessibility Widget and hidden label elements for screen reader compatibility. The site is fully legible without using any CSS or JavaScript, and its navigation elements do not rely on hover interactions. I also remain open to incorporating additional suggestions or recommendations to make my campaign even more accessible to people with disabilities.

**4. RespectAbility published Disability in Philanthropy & Nonprofits, based on our study on the levels of disability inclusion in the social sector across the country. This large-scale study found significant data showing that nationwide, organizations overall want to be inclusive, but are unintentionally excluding the one-in-five people with disabilities. What will you do to promote policies and practices designed to support full community engagement, access and inclusion of people with disabilities?**

As Senator, I will support efforts to ensure that federal agencies explicitly include people with disabilities in their diversity and inclusion initiatives, including their hiring practices, and encourage the publication and promotion of best practices for ensuring inclusion with employers, organizations, and programs across the country.

**5. Elected officials have multiple opportunities to demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, full community participation and celebrating the contributions and accomplishments of people with disabilities through press releases, speeches, celebratory events including National Disability Employment Awareness Month. There are significant stigmas that create attitudinal barriers that limit options and perpetuates low expectations for people with disabilities. What measures will you take to combat these stigmas and promote opportunities for people with disabilities?**

During my time as Governor, I declared October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month in Montana, highlighting the importance of awareness about employment for people with disabilities. As Senator, I will continue to use the opportunities available to me to highlight the contributions that Montanans with disabilities make to our economy, workplaces, and communities.

**6. In our nation’s public schools, there are 6.3 million students with disabilities. The changing demographics of America are reflected in these students, with 11.4 percent of students with disabilities nationwide, almost 720,000, also identified as English-language learners. Their accommodation needs are compounded by the fact that many come from households that do not speak English at home, adding an extra challenge for parental interaction. It can also be harder to diagnose disabilities in children when they are English language learners. Additionally, immigration issues and fears over the public charge rule impact students with disabilities, their families and the wider workforce. What policies would you advance to enable students and their families who are English language learners with disabilities to succeed in school and employment?**

Full funding for IDEA, ELL programs in Title III of ESEA, and educator training programs in Title II of ESEA are essential for ensuring that English-language learning students with disabilities–and the folks who teach them–have the resources they need to be successful in the classroom. As Senator, I will fight to secure these resources, and push the Department of Education to work in a coordinated and holistic manner across these programs to ensure that comprehensive and appropriate supports are provided to students and their families.

**7. Housing, criminal justice, climate issues, transportation and every other area have significant impacts on people with disabilities. 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?**

One of our most pressing priorities as a nation is to ensure that every person has access to affordable, quality healthcare. We have made real progress in expanding access to healthcare, including through initiatives like Medicaid expansion, which I secured as Governor. But too many people struggle with unaffordable healthcare costs, and this particularly impacts people with disabilities who rely on healthcare access to maintain their ability to live independently in their communities. As Senator, I will fight to build on the progress we’ve already made by making sure that every American is covered by health insurance, and taking on special interests to drive down the escalating costs of healthcare and prescription drugs.