**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 in Maryland deserves a world class education, regardless of race, class, national origin, or disability. Children with disabilities and English Language Learners have the lowest rates of school readiness when entering kindergarten as well as the largest achievement gap compared to their peers. This world class education starts with an inclusive, accessible, high quality early childhood education. As Governor, I support the plan presented in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future to expand public pre-K to children with disabilities regardless of income to ensure that exactly these children are prepared to get the most out of the classroom. I also support fully funding the Blueprint to expand funding, services, and support for students with disabilities from birth to 21. Part of this means ensuring every student has an educational experience that is full of meaningful days and results in a meaningful outcome. As Governor, I will support the use of the new endorsements for the Maryland Certificate of Program Completion to ensure every student leaves our school system with a pathway to employment. In tandem with the Blueprint, I will work to make sure that our classrooms are fully integrated and that all students receive a culturally competent education. For students with disabilities and English-language learners, developing culturally competent curricula and creating workforce opportunities for educators from diverse backgrounds will go far in closing the achievement gap.

**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?**

I am proud that Maryland has already led the way by becoming an employment-first state, ensuring our residents with disabilities have meaningful days by prioritizing employment over day programs. In order to continue this legacy, I will direct the workforce development agencies across the state to develop career pathways programs for individuals with all kinds of disabilities, including developmental, physical, and intellectual. Part of these pathways will include increasing the use of the underutilized Maryland Disability Employment Tax Credit.

I have also been proud as both Marylanders and citizens across the country come to terms with our dark history of prejudice and privilege and commit to embracing the ideals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). As Governor, I will work to make sure our disability community is included in our definition of DEIJ. I will lead by example by recruiting and hiring individuals with disabilities to work directly alongside me in Annapolis. I will also direct every agency to develop strategies to develop their disability workforce and ensure individuals with disabilities have equal opportunity for employment in state government.

**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?**

Throughout my career, I have stood up to fight alongside our disability community for the rights they deserve. I had the privilege of enforcing the Olmstead Decision of the Supreme Court which opened up opportunities for people with disabilities to live in community-based settings. When I was Labor Secretary, I made sure that employers understood their *obligations* to give opportunity to people with disabilities. Over the course of my campaign, I have brought on disability advocates and activists to advise on my disability platform and ensure that I am equipped to address inequities in the disability community on day one in Annapolis. As Governor of Maryland, I will ensure that my administration is accessible to all people by creating plain language and user friendly online content and traveling the state to hear from individuals with disabilities directly in their communities. I will also work directly with the Maryland Department of Disabilities to broaden their reach both within state government and across the communities of our state to ensure the important work that they have already done continues to improve the lives of all Marylanders with disabilities.

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

Fighting the harmful stigmas associated with individuals with disabilities starts with deeply integrating our communities. This integration has to happen in our workplaces, our residential communities, and in our classrooms. To reduce stigma, individuals with disabilities need to live, learn, work, and play alongside all other members of our community. As Governor, I will work to foster a new generation of children who have not just exposure to, but opportunities to build deeper relationships with people living with disabilities. In order to elevate the voices of our disability communities, I will also appoint a cabinet-level secretary to hold our office and the state agencies accountable to our disability rights agenda and goals.

**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?**

As a country and as a state we have a moral imperative to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the freedom to move safely, live independently, and vote in every election. As Governor, I am eager to ensure that every Marylander can get around their community and around our state freely, including expanding public transportation routes to meet the needs of the disability community and improving our failing paratransit system. I will also work to ensure voters with disabilities have the opportunity to vote in every election. This means making sure our ballots are written in plain language, expanding voting options for the visually impaired, and making it easier for voters to receive and return their ballots by mail. Finally, I will ensure that individuals living with disabilities have access to integrated, accessible, and affordable housing in communities across our state. Part of achieving this goal means tackling the long wait times and lack of funding for home- and community-based services and support that have long plagued our healthcare system. By empowering Marylanders with disabilities to mobilize, move, and live freely, we will unlock unprecedented potential not only for these individuals, but for families, communities, and the future of our state.