**1) Education and Skills: What steps will you take to ensure that students with disabilities of all backgrounds have what they need to succeed?**

Education is, and traditionally has been, the great equalizer in America. Color, gender, disability status – none of that should matter when it comes to getting an education. For students with disabilities, ensuring compliance with the IDEA and offering high quality, free education, with appropriate resources and supports, remain essential. As an attorney, I’ve assisted school districts in Southern California create IEPs, resolve disputes with parents of disabled students, and comply with educational mandates for disabled students. In doing that work, I became acutely aware of the disparities between schools in more affluent areas with more resources to offer, and less affluent areas where resources were often hard to come by. And often, families and students of color are most impacted by the economic and resources disparities.

Notably, people with disabilities represent about 20% of the American population, the largest of all protected categories under educational and workplace laws. And yet, all too often, we fail to adequately address and accommodate the unique needs of those individuals.

*Payan v. LACCD* laid bare many of the barriers and difficulties disabled students face in higher education, and in the fight over whether to appeal to SCOTUS raised an even more important fundamental question: Should higher educational institutes proactively identify and address barriers to education, even when it mean exceeding the basic requirements of the ADA, Section 504, and other disability rights legislation. I would argue that the educational accommodations at issue in *Payan* are fundamental and should simply be provided as a matter of course, without need for dispute or litigation.

Education, from K-12 and beyond, provides the fundamental stepping stones to careers and financial stability. If we don’t invest in education for disabled students that meets their needs, and if we don’t pair those efforts with real opportunities in our workplaces, we are failing not just those with disabilities, but also the fully-abled, who can benefit so much from the diversity, perspectives, and experience they offer.

As a City Councilmember, I will technically have no direct impact on schools, school spending, or school policy. The Los Angeles Unified School District – a separate governmental entity – oversees all this. However, I will advocate for a joint LAUSD and City committee to address issues and opportunities for collaboration, including City-supported resources for disabled students and workforce development.

In addition to my work as an attorney on special education issues, I have also trained and advised dozens of businesses and municipalities on ADA access issues, including physical access requirements and web-based access for those with impairments that impact internet use. This issue was so important to me that I installed disability access tools on my campaign website (as well a Spanish language translator). I believe I am the only candidate who has done so.

When I am elected, those in the disability community will always have my ear and a seat at the table when making policy decisions that affect their community.

**2) Access and 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?**

As mentioned above, at the outset of my campaign, I insisted that disability access tools be built into my website, and I actually have numerous disabled volunteers supporting my campaign. Also as noted above, I am more than willing to give the disabled community a voice at City Hall, and to incorporate their needs, concerns, and opinions into all decision-making that impacts them. I am also committed to recruiting and hiring individuals with disabilities, and I will ensure that any disability is reasonably accommodated in my workplace.

**3) Homelessness, Poverty, and Equity: What is your plan to address homelessness among your constituents, to work with other organizations to address the issue in the region, and to coordinate with other municipalities to create more affordable and accessible housing?**

According to the Plan to House LA, there are nearly 400,000 individuals (nearly half of whom are seniors) who face housing insecurity and significant barriers in obtaining affordable and accessible housing suitable to their specific needs. And, while various studies and government agencies report differing levels of prevalence of mental or physical disabilities among the unhoused population, even a casual observer of the crisis on our streets can see that these issues are part of the crisis.

In my district, I will prioritize affordable housing for seniors and disabled individuals, whether that involves new builds or adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure. And it is imperative that adequate medical and mental healthcare access be incorporated into our housing developments. As we have decoupled housing and healthcare in recent decades, we’ve seen the tragic explosion of people with nowhere else to go making homes on the streets and in our public spaces.

We cannot neglect the important of supportive services. All too often, I hear leaders talk about “wrap around” services, but when you look at the number of individuals dying both on the street and in shelters and motel programs, there is a significant disconnect and raises to key questions: 1) are people actually taking advantage of the services being provided; and 2) how effective are those services? We need to carefully evaluate which are working, and double down on the programs and services that are actually getting people the help they need.

We also know that we are losing board and care facilities at an alarming rate around the City – with a reimbursement rate of only $35 per day, the system makes it virtually impossible for these facilities to operate. Although the reimbursement rate is a federal issue, at a local level, we should find ways to financially cover the gap, protect and preserve the existing facilities, and prioritize development and financing for new ones.

**4) Other Priorities: What other policies that impact people with disabilities are you ready and eager to work on? What is your plan to involve your constituents with disabilities in key decision-making processes?**

Safe and accessible public transportation, workforce development and economic opportunity, and expansion of mental and physical health services are essential components of my platform. As noted above, I welcome the opportunity to collaborate and work with the disabled community and advocacy groups on all policies matters that affect them.