**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?**

From cradle to career, education is one of the key pillars for Marylanders to access jobs, higher wages, and the opportunity to build wealth that can be passed on to their children. One of my top priorities as governor will be addressing the learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has disproportionately impacted students with disabilities. Our administration will not retreat on the [Blueprint for Maryland’s Future](https://marylandeducators.org/the-blueprint-a-13-year-plan-for-investment-and-opportunity/). As governor, I will ensure it’s full funding and implementation and our administration will work to secure the additional funding needed to ensure our ELL students and students with disabilities are well-positioned for a bright future in the workforce. That includes urging our partners in Congress to fully fund the Individuals Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that has been consistently underfunded to the tune of $[350.7](https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/IDEA%20Funding%20Gap%20by%20State%20FY%202020.pdf) million per year.

Importantly, we must also address the critical [shortage](https://www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/critical-shortage-of-special-education-teachers-as-kids-head-back-to-school/2650388/) of special education and [ELL](https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/11/07/english-language-teachers-towson/) teachers that existed long before the pandemic. I recognize the people closest to the challenges are also closest to the solutions and as governor, I will work closely with our educators to ensure we are offering them the competitive wages and benefits needed to address staffing shortages, in addition to partnering with public health professionals to ensure schools are safe and staff are not working in fear of the virus. Additionally, our administration will also work to better support and expand programs like Towson University’s [ELEVATE](https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/11/07/english-language-teachers-towson/) Program which is working to address critical shortages of ELL teachers.

**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?**

The North Star of the Moore-Miller administration will be expanding work, wages, and wealth for every person in Maryland, with a commitment to equity. There are more than 320,000 working-age people with disabilities across Maryland and we cannot expect to build a strong economy without making sure every person is able to take part in it. We will ensure that Marylanders with disabilities have strong pathways to meaningful employment and opportunities to start their own businesses.

This work begins by improving data collection around working-aged Marylanders with disabilities so that we can identify, and co-design targeted practices and policies to close employment gaps through strong pathways to the workforce. That includes working with Maryland’s world-class institutions of higher education, community college system and other stakeholders to build and strengthen specialized job training, apprenticeship, degree, and certification programs and create wraparound supports and resources necessary to ensure completion. We will also work in partnership with our business community to design and implement new programs to ensure our residents with disabilities have access to hands-on work experience that can lead them to a job.

I will also make it easier for Marylanders with disabilities to start and grow a business through [MBE](https://mva.maryland.gov/about-mva/Pages/mbe.aspx) certification that makes it easier for businesses with a primary minority owner, which includes owners with disabilities, to win state contracts. As governor, I will reform our procurement process to make it easier for MBE businesses to win the state’s business so more entrepreneurs with disabilities can benefit.

**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?**

Right now, Mayland needs a governor who will tackle generational challenges with a stronger vision for our state. Creating opportunities for people to step into better jobs, earn higher wages, and build wealth that people can pass down to their children – especially for underserved communities – is the North Star that will guide my campaign and my administration when I’m governor. And we can do it. I know how to do it because it is how I have always led – by bringing people together around big problems, elevating voices, and focusing on changing bottom line realities. That’s what I did in combat, building and running a small business here in Maryland, and serving as CEO of one of the largest nonprofits in the United States focused on lifting people out of poverty. And that is what I will do as Maryland’s next governor. I will be a true partner to Maryland’s disability community and together, we will build a state that lives up to the principle I’ve lived by since my service as a captain in the Army – leave no one behind.

Additionally, our administration will ensure that communications and events are accessible and purposeful, and we will ensure that our actions are fully aligned with our values as an equitable and inclusive administration. We understand the expertise and the passion that lived experience brings to conversations and as governor, I will always welcome the narratives and perspectives of Maryland’s disability community.

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

Right now, people from Maryland’s disability community are doing amazing work as educators, entrepreneurs, public servants, and in other vital roles. These accomplishments should be celebrated. As both my running mate, Aruna Miller, and I know first hand, personal narrative and the power of story are remarkable tools for promoting positive change. We believe that one of the most effective ways to fight stigma is to provide space for people to tell their stories and share their lived experiences. The Moore-Miller administration will help elevate the successes of the disability community so their voices, accomplishments, and stories are truly heard. We will make sure that Marylanders with disabilities are respected as full members of our society and create more inclusive opportunities for work, wages, and wealth no matter one’s level of ability. We will be the partners that our disability community needs in Annapolis to break down stigmas and work together to ensure that no Marylander is left behind.

**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?**

Improving the lives of Marylanders with disabilities and ensuring that individuals are able to reach their full potential cannot be done with a one size fits all approach. That is why our administration will holistically address these issues by fulfilling Maryland’s commitment to the disability community through the 13 outcomes set forth in the State Disabilities Plan. Fulfill our state’s commitment by achieving the 13 Outcomes set forth in the State Disabilities Plan. Additionally, I recognize the people closest to the challenges are also closest to the solutions and as governor, I will ensure that our disability community always has a seat at the table and a clear line of communication. I believe that economic mobility, education, and affordable housing are three of the most pressing challenges and priorities across Maryland, especially now as we come out of the pandemic, and I look forward to engaging with the disability community on these issues, and others.