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United Way IL Candidate Survey: 72nd District Incumbent Rep. Mike Halpin (D-Rock Island)

United Way recently asked legislative candidates in Iowa and Illinois to complete a candidate survey so that we could share their stands on issues related to our priorities: education, income, health and equity.

While United Way does not participate in partisan or political activity, we are pleased to offer this information so that voters can assess each candidate's alignment with issues important to United Way as they prepare to cast their ballots.

All answers below are posted in their entirety, as submitted by the candidate. To see the full list of responses to candidate surveys ahead of the 2020 General Election, visit www.unitedwayqc.org/candidate-surveys.

1. What specific actions can the State of Illinois take to address the disparities in school achievement and graduation rates between African American students and their white peers?

The State of Illinois could provide substantially more funding to K-12 schools, and reduce the dependency of school districts on local property taxes. Relying on local property taxes results in an immediate wealth disparity among districts. In 2017, I helped pass the Evidence Based Model that has begun to reverse this unjust system.

2. Would you support changes to the school-aid formula to provide additional support to districts with high rates of poverty, minority populations and English language learners to help stem the decline in academic success among these populations?

Yes. The Evidence Based Model already takes many of these items into account, but strengthening our local schools' ability to serve these populations would result in additional returns on the investment in these children.

3. What role could the State of Illinois play in ensuring all K-12 students have access to broadband and technology to enable virtual learning?

The Governor is fully supportive of broadband expansion throughout our state, including both downstate urban and rural communities. I am supportive of these efforts and support state investment in this infrastructure expansion. The state will ultimately reap the economic benefits of expanding job markets and better educational opportunities that result.

4. A network of quality, affordable childcare services – including wrap-around care for school-age children – is critical to parents remaining in the workforce and businesses retaining staff. Do you support additional state investment in childcare services and, if so, what ideas do you have for strengthening the childcare system in Illinois during the COVID crisis and post COVID?

I support expanding child care services so that they are affordable for every family. When Governor Rauner restricted eligibility back in 2015, the General Assembly pushed back, ultimately reversing the decision and allowing more parents to benefit from the program. The damage, however, was done, and many parents were unaware that they might again be eligible. The State can assist by providing stability in the program, providing funds for advertising state programs to new parents. I would also like to see an educational property tax exemption for any center conducting early childhood education.

5. Rock Island County has a high rate of poverty which dramatically impacts the health and stability of families and the community. What could the State of Illinois do to provide more opportunities for residents to achieve economic independence and meet basic needs?

The State of Illinois should be providing a strong social safety net so that people can take risks in starting a new business or taking a new job. We should ensure that workers are able to earn a living wage. All people should have access to health care and workers' compensation benefits. The State should be developing infrastructure. I've ensured that there is nearly \$60 million in capital Project funding right here in Rock Island County. Additionally, reducing property taxes (by properly funding school districts and municipalities) will make the Illinois Quad Cities more affordable.

6. Describe what you'd like to see the State of Illinois do – perhaps in partnership with city and county governments – to address systemic racism.

I believe a good starting point is the agenda proposed by The Resolution. Better training, diverting essential functions from police to other municipal employees with specialized knowledge, and citizen oversight and accountability are all needed to combat this very broad and complex problem. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the legislative black caucus as well as local activists to enact such an agenda.

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About United Way of the Quad Cities

United Way is a community-based social change organization that puts opportunity in the hands of all Quad Citizens. Working with our determined partners, volunteers, advocates and donors, we lead the charge to improve education, income and health – the building blocks of opportunity. The result is a mobilized community where every Quad Citizen is living their best possible life. unitedwayqc.org