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United Way IA Candidate Survey: District 94 Challenger Marie Gleason (D-Pleasant Valley)

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 Iowa take to address the disparities in school achievement and graduation rates between African American students and their white peers?

We need to recognize that communities have different needs and different barriers. To address disparities between Black students and their White peers, the State of Iowa should:

1. Provide weighted-funding for schools and make investments where it is needed to improve academic achievement. Several states have already implemented this.
2. Utilize data to identify where assistance is needed and fund at appropriate levels
 - a. Need-based aid for K-12
 - b. Grant programs for higher education
3. Correlate at-risk funding to the percentage of at-risk children

Public education is an investment for Iowa as well as for individuals, and it pays dividends in stronger communities, a better quality of life, and in a knowledgeable workforce.

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. Currently the formula has some variables that recognize that different districts and different student groups have additional hurdles. But the formula is limited because it is required to be revenue-neutral when updated every 5 years. School-aid needs to reflect actual needs.

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

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding has helped with expanding broadband across the state. Progress has been made but there are still areas lacking access. The State of Iowa can assist by updating the way broadband is taxed - instead of taxing by the mile, it is critical infrastructure that benefits the entire state. State policy should reflect that.

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 Iowa during the COVID crisis and post COVID?

We need private / public partnerships for childcare. This matters to Iowa businesses looking to develop, grow, and retain their workforce. Childcare breakdowns lead to more employee absenteeism and lost productivity. Workers having reliable, quality childcare leads to an increased bottom-line, higher productivity, and a stronger workforce and community. To strengthen childcare we need to have an adequate supply of providers. Many providers have left and many communities now suffer from "childcare deserts". To close this gap, childcare needs to be recognized through appropriate pay and benefits.

5. Do you support state investment in the 211 system used for health and human service information and referral and disaster recovery? Why or why not?

Yes. This would enable citizens to engage social network services (childcare, elderly service, disaster, etc.) in a more efficient manner.

6. Do you support a state sales tax exemption for food banks and pantries to address food insecurity? Why or why not?

Yes. Food insecurity is a very real problem. Food banks and pantries are already serving a very real need in communities. Donations to food banks should be used for meeting this need and not for taxes.

7. Scott County has a high rate of poverty which dramatically impacts the health and stability of families and the community. What could the State of Iowa do to provide more opportunities for Iowans to achieve economic independence?

The following would assist with providing more opportunities for lowans to achieve economic independence: • Education affordability • Accessible and affordable healthcare, including mental healthcare • Living wages • Food security • Childcare assistance

- o In addition to the points mentioned above, adjusting childcare assistance so that there is not a “cliff” if a person is able to obtain a higher paying job.

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

In June “A More Perfect Union” legislation was passed – A big step forward for Iowa to address systemic racism. Additionally, communities should work in a collaborative way to address diverse group’s concerns. Goals should include listening with the aim of understanding and implementing real, measurable, agreed upon actions, including a system of accountability that is measured and shared.

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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