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United Way IA Candidate Survey: District 89 Incumbent Rep. Monica Kurth (D-Davenport)

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?

I think we need to address the needs of both racial minorities and all economically deprived groups. The necessary actions would include excellent childcare and preschool options which might help to even the "playing field" at the time when children enter formal education. Families who are struggling also need good holistic before and after school programs so parents can work without worrying about latchkey kids. Students need continuous excellent counseling that focuses on options and encourages "reach" goals.

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! When children and families live in poverty, there is constant stress caused by the threat of inability to meet basic needs of food, clothing, shelter. Maslow's Hierarchy describes it so well; it's very difficult to focus on higher order needs when your very existence is being threatened. Additional support could provide social service/counseling support to both kids and their parents, before and after school care, continuation of meal support through the weekend.

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?

Many schools have had to deal with this during the months of the Covid epidemic. Iowa can add CARES money to expansion of Broadband. The state could add a Chief level role of Information Technology to the state administrative infrastructure to enhance the provision and administration of information technology. School districts have put money into chrome books, ipads, etc., to bring students to one-to-one programs. Students without home access to the internet could be provided with hotspots to make that access possible. Also, districts may need additional moneys to provide computer support services to help with trouble shooting that families may need, especially when they are in the beginning stages of learning how to deal with technology.

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 will be in the Covid crisis for a good long time. During this time, quality childcare with proper protections is vital to parents being able to remain in work places. Childcare needs to be flexible, reliable, and able to provide proper testing and safety measures. PPE is costly but the cost of childcare is already overwhelming for many families. Now is the time to really look at what our system looks like and how it needs to change to adjust to our current reality.

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?

I would like to know how well known this program is and how extensive its use is. We need information, referral, and disaster recovery information that really does what it is designed to do. I've had many people who called the 211 system and felt that the answers they needed were not available there. If we have it, it must be timely and provide the needed information.

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

Absolutely. I've sponsored a bill for 2 years in the House to get the state sales tax exemption for food banks. It did not get a subcommittee hearing because the majority party did not consider it part of their policy approach. This year, in our special summer session, we were able to get it included in a department of revenue omnibus bill; it passed the House but was taken out by the Senate. When it returned for a final vote in the House, the majority party refused to allow it to be added again. When I saw trucks full of boxes and bags of food waiting to be

delivered to families in need this summer, I realized why that exemption is so important. Boxes, bags, packaging are not free and take away from the truly important need to provide food. Even though it sounds like a small amount of money state wide, every dollar saved in packaging can provide several meals to hungry adults and children.

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?

First, we must raise the minimum wage. Again, we've been attempting this for years but the majority party opposed. I believe, of all the neighboring states, only one other maintains the \$7.25 minimum wage, which is not enough to even begin to live on. In addition, Iowa has training and education opportunities but our community colleges have the 3rd highest tuition rate in the midwest. CC's were developed to be open access educational centers but students are being priced out by high tuition rates. Having worked in a CC for many years, I saw the struggle of parents with children who had to constantly juggle childcare, transportation, textbook costs and saw many who gave up because of all the difficulties they faced.

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.

Training, education, careful hiring practices all would help to address systemic racism. This summer, we passed 3 bills to address policing issues: banning chokeholds, allowing the attorney general to investigate cases of police brutality, and ending the hiring of police who had been "let go" because of incidences of violence. These laws were only a beginning. It takes a change in organization and mindset to really begin to change these issues. Some helps might include more training in dealing with the kind of problems that won't be helped by force. Hiring of more minority officers, more neighborhood policing with time spent walking the beat, changing the recent "militarization" of police forces.

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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

