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United Way IA Candidate Survey: District 97 Challenger Ryan Zeskey (D-LeClaire)

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?

Funding for broadband access for all Iowans would help level the playing field for students. Nutrition assistance is also important to student achievement. Expanding family planning services for couples looking at possible parenthood should be an option. After school programs in communities would allow parents to work and kids to create and maintain closer social bonds.

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

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?

Internet access is as important today as electricity, gas, or water. Many of tomorrow's jobs will rely on access to online tools today. Iowa should consider this a top priority for our infrastructure and for our future.

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?

Workers in healthcare and in education will fuel Iowa's rise or fall in the coming decades. It's time Iowa's Legislature fund these important programs. Hiring and retaining good teachers and workers will be governed by their ability to negotiate for fair wages 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. Mental health has been a stigmatizing issue for so many, but funding mental health care can help remove these social barriers for folks to get the help they need. Likewise, disaster relief will be a growing problem as we fight to address climate change and our role in it.

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

Yes. Nutrition is necessary to good health and should be supported by the state, not taxed by it.

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?

Trade and apprenticeship programs that begin in high schools, broadband access, and peer counseling programs could all have a positive effect on low income communities.

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.

Implicit and unconscious bias training in all fields is a good place to start. As a 90%+ white state, Iowa will need to work hard at the local level to address systemic racism.

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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