

## Senator Casey

1. Do you believe that any school that accepts public funds should be accountable to the public? If so, how? How would that accountability extend to all students, including students from minority groups and students with disabilities – as required by ESSA?

**ANSWER: I believe all schools should be accountable to the parents and communities they serve. Schools must be transparent about their performance with all students so that parents can make informed decisions about what is best for their children.**

2. How do you plan to advocate for adult learners in your role as the Secretary of Education?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I look forward to helping adult learners receive the education and services they need to be successful in the global economy. I will work with the Department of Labor, in particular, to ensure we are providing those services effectively.**

**Reforms enacted in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, which was reauthorized in 2014 as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, were meant to help states and communities improve services for adult learners to better provide them the education and skills they need to obtain employment and increase self-sufficiency. If confirmed, I will work through the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education to implement these reforms to improve outcomes for adult learners.**

3. Adult education State grants support programs that assist (1) adults in becoming literate and in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for employment, (2) parents in obtaining the skills necessary to become full partners in the education of their children, and (3) adults in the completion of a secondary education. Some adults enrolled in adult education are students seeking their high school diploma or equivalent but a surprisingly large number of American adults who have earned a high school diploma still struggle with basic skills. Twenty percent (20%) of adults with a high school diploma have less-than-basic literacy skills and 35% of adults with a high school degree have less-than-basic numeracy skills. According to a recent study conducted by OECD's Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), at least three million low-skilled American adults would like to enroll in Adult Education services, but cannot access a program. Without access, undereducated, under-prepared adults cannot qualify for jobs with family sustaining incomes that require not only a high school equivalency, but also some college—preferably a one or two year certificate in a high demand occupation. And, adults without a high school diploma or functioning below high school level cannot qualify for either community college programs or high demand occupations. Tax reform and relaxing regulations can improve the macro-economy, but it will not address the needs of millions of Americans who lack the skills to find meaningful work in an increasingly competitive economy. How do you envision the Administration incorporating Adult Education into its competitiveness agenda?

**ANSWER: Too many Americans are suffering in the current economy. President Trump**

made improving the employment opportunities of these Americans a cornerstone of his campaign, and his administration will work to improve the prospects of those left behind in this economy. As stated before, reforms enacted in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, which was reauthorized in 2014 as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, were meant to help states and communities improve services for adult learners to better provide them the education and skills they need to obtain employment and increase self-sufficiency. If confirmed, I will work through the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education to implement these reforms to improve outcomes for adult learners. Combined with other efforts across the government, we have an opportunity to help more Americans achieve the American dream.

4. ESSA requires that states not preclude students who participate in an alternate assessment from attempting to meet the requirements of a regular high school diploma. However, many schools report the students won't be permitted any modifications of assignments if they are to meet the requirements of the regular high school diploma. This practice defeats the point of the statutory provision because by definition students who participate in an alternate assessment work on enrolled grade content--but with substantial supports, adaptations, and different expectations for achievement. Will you provide guidance to states to ensure they provide appropriate supports including accommodations, adaptations, and modifications in order to allow students taking the alternate assessment to meet the requirements of the regular high school diploma?

**ANSWER:** If confirmed, I will carefully review all existing guidance documents that are in effect to ensure that guidance from the Department of Education serves as a helpful tool to states, school districts, educators, and parents as they work to implement federal law and ensure all students receive the education they deserve. I will also work with stakeholders to determine what additional guidance is needed to ensure that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is implemented as Congress intended and all students are well served.

5. What are your plans for federal engagement in charter school funding or regulation? If you endorse such funding, what safeguards would you introduce to strengthen the performance and accountability of such schools and to ensure that all other public schools also are supported to perform well?

**ANSWER:** I support the federal charter school program, which was reauthorized as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The reforms made to the program will allow for the expansion and replication of high-quality charter schools as well as the opening of new charter schools. If confirmed, I will implement programs consistent with the law passed by Congress. In addition, I will seek ways to increase cooperation between public charter schools and traditional public schools. I believe both sectors can learn from each other ways to improve educational outcomes for students, and I believe the Department of Education can better highlight and encourage that cooperation.

6. Do you think the Department should award hundreds of millions of dollars to states because states want it, rather than because states can demonstrate a track record of launching high quality charter schools and having processes in place to close ineffective charter schools?

**ANSWER: I support the federal charter school program, which was reauthorized as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act. The reforms made to the program will allow for the expansion and replication of high-quality charter schools as well as the opening of new charter schools. Those reforms also encouraged states to improve charter school authorizing to ensure that only high-quality schools expand or replicate, and low-performing schools are closed. If confirmed, I will implement programs consistent with the law passed by Congress.**

7. As you implement the Charter Schools Program, how will you ensure a state that fails to demonstrate its commitment to quality and accountability does not receive federal taxpayer funds to grow more charter schools?

**ANSWER: I support the federal charter school program, which was reauthorized as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act. The reforms made to the program will allow for the expansion and replication of high-quality charter schools as well as the opening of new charter schools. Those reforms also encouraged states to improve charter school authorizing to ensure that only high-quality schools expand or replicate, and low-performing schools are closed. If confirmed, I will implement that program consistent with the law passed by Congress.**

8. Charter schools are known for having disproportionately harsh discipline practices, including higher rates of suspension for Black and Latino students over their white peers. Do you see this as a problem contributing to the School to Prison Pipeline? How do you intend to address this if confirmed as Secretary of Education?

**ANSWER: I oppose unfair discipline practices that unnecessarily punish students rather than supporting them. I also know parents are seeking educational options that will provide their children the education they deserve. This is why tens of thousands of students, many of whom are low-income or students of color, are on public charter school waiting lists nationwide. These families are desperately seeking safe learning environments that will allow their children to thrive. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee to find ways to increase the options available to these families.**

9. A number of different studies have shown that attending an online charter school leads to worsening academic performance compared to students attending brick and mortar schools. Indeed, students who switch from a traditional public school to an online charter experience a significant drop in academic achievement compared to students who stay in traditional schools. For instance, a middle or elementary school student starting at the 50th percentile of performance in math would, on average, fall to the 36th percentile after one year at a virtual school. In addition, a number of reports have documented serious mismanagement at online charters. Despite the terrible academic results of online schools and misuse of taxpayer dollars, why have you supported diverting taxpayer dollars away from traditional public schools and towards online schools?

**ANSWER: Unlike traditional public schools, public charter schools can be closed when**

they fail to meet the expectations outlined in their charters. Public charter schools, whether brick-and-mortar or virtual, that are failing to provide students a quality education as outlined in their charters should be closed.

However, high-quality virtual charter schools provide valuable options to families, particularly those who live in rural areas where brick-and-mortar schools might not have the capacity to provide the range of courses or other educational experiences a student desires. Because of this, we must be careful not to brand an entire category of schools that is working for many students. For example, the following virtual academies have four-year cohort graduation rates of at least 90 percent:

- Idaho Virtual Academy (IDVA): 90 percent
- Nevada Virtual Academy (NVVA): 100 percent
- Ohio Virtual Academy (OHVA): 92 percent
- Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy (OVCA): 91 percent
- Texas Virtual Academy (TXVA): 96 percent
- Utah Virtual Academy (UTVA): 96 percent
- Wisconsin Virtual Academy (WIVA): 96 percent

If confirmed, I will implement each federal program under my jurisdiction consistent with the requirements spelled out by Congress to ensure that taxpayer funds are well spent and students are well served.

10. Balancing transparency with important accountability requirements is critical to ensuring that all students receive a quality education. Unfortunately, Michigan charter law has freed authorizers from most of their regulatory obligations resulting in a general lack of accountability and reduced transparency including in the required financial reporting for charter schools. For students, the impact of this ‘free to be you and me policy’ has had a disastrous impact on academic achievement, particularly for vulnerable populations of students, including students with disabilities. How committed are you to this model? Do you believe that it has been successful? What lessons have you learned, if any, that will be utilized as you oversee the approval and implementation of charter grants at the U.S. Department of Education?

**ANSWER:** I am committed to ensuring families have options. In Detroit, the statistics are appalling. Per the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 7 percent of students are proficient in reading and 4 percent are proficient in math. None of us would leave our children in schools performing so poorly.

Public charter schools have provided a viable alternative. Detroit’s public charters schools outperform their traditional counterparts on the state assessments. Charter students in Michigan gain an additional two months of learning in reading and math over their traditional public school peers. In Detroit, the gain is three months. In both reading and math, African American students in Detroit’s public charter schools have significantly larger growth compared to African American students in Detroit Public Schools. Hispanic charter students in Detroit show significantly better outcomes in math compared to their Hispanic peers in Detroit Public Schools. If I am confirmed, I hope to work with this Committee to expand educational choices for families. I have seen



**firsthand the positive impact of increased choice in my home state of Michigan.**

11. A recent study of Michigan schools found that overwhelmingly, the biggest financial impact on school districts was the result of declining enrollment and revenue loss, especially where school choice and charters are most prevalent. The research shows that as charter schools started to expand, schools in cities statewide in particular, lost about nearly half of their revenue in a span of 10 years. Even more, findings from the report showed that the higher the charter penetration, the higher the adverse impact on district finances. Yet with nearly two decades of school choice growth, Michigan has dropped from its earlier rating near the top of the states to its current rank near the bottom for fourth- and eighth-grade math and fourth-grade reading on NAEP. In addition, the advocacy group, EdTrust reports that roughly half of Michigan's charter schools ranked in the bottom quarter of all public schools for academic performance. Based on this, what do you think needs to be changed in Michigan's approach to funding and managing schools – including charter schools – and how would the failures of Michigan's reform strategy inform your actions as Secretary of Education?

**ANSWER: Public charter schools in Michigan are a success story. Charter students in Michigan gain an additional two months of learning in reading and math over their traditional public school peers.**

**In Detroit, the gain is three months. In both reading and math, African American students in Detroit charter schools have significantly larger growth compared to African American students in Detroit Public Schools. Hispanic charter students in Detroit show significantly better outcomes in math compared to their Hispanic peers in Detroit Public Schools. I believe in funding what works, and in Michigan, particularly in Detroit, charter schools are demonstrating their value by improving student achievement.**

12. Providing evidence, do you believe the current model of choice without uniform accountability has been successful in Michigan and will you commit to upholding the kinds of strong charter accountability that we put in place during ESSA so we're not wasting tax payer money? Please describe how you will go about implementing measures of accountability.

**ANSWER: As I said during my confirmation hearing, I support accountability for all schools. In your question, you imply that charter schools have different accountability than traditional public schools in Michigan. This is not the case. Instead, I supported legislation - now law -- that imposed the same accountability on all schools. Parents need and deserve to know how their children are performing. Any and all obstacles to good information should be removed. There was an effort by critics of parental choice to limit options for families and call that accountability. Their real effort was to create a new layer of bureaucracy -- an eight-person unelected mayoral appointed board that sought to limit the growth of charters and dictate their operations. This legislation would have hamstrung charter schools and kept many failing public schools open at the expense of vulnerable students. I joined with parents and other reformers to oppose this scheme.**

**If I am confirmed, I will implement ESSA, including the strong accountability measures found in the charter school program.**

13. Aside from the market based approaches that you've advocated for, which do not appear to be helping students and families in Michigan (demonstrated, in part, by Michigan's precipitous drop in NAEP score rankings over the last two decades), what can be done to improve the education for students who attend traditional public schools?

**ANSWER: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) calls for locally developed plans tailored to each school's and community's specific needs and I believe this is the right approach. From my experience, I have seen increased student performance when schools improve quality, increase accountability and expand choice and if confirmed, I will look forward to meeting with stakeholders to discuss ways that we can work to improve student achievement for all students.**

14. How do you propose to deal with groups of children who are targeted and disciplined at much higher rate on the basis of their race, disability, primary language, at a disproportionate rate than white students?

**ANSWER: I oppose discrimination of any kind against students. If confirmed, I will enforce all civil rights laws under the Department of Education's jurisdiction to protect students' access to equal educational opportunity.**

15. How do you plan to enforce the legal requirements clarified in guidance by the Office for Civil Rights explaining schools' and districts' nondiscrimination requirements with regard to school discipline or equitable distribution of resources?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will carefully review all existing guidance documents that are in effect to ensure that guidance from the Department of Education serves as a helpful tool to states, local school districts, teachers, school personnel, and others who implement federal education law.**

16. Do you believe the Department of Education has a role in ensuring pregnant and parenting K-12 students have access to the same educational environments as non-parenting students? If so, what role should the Department of Education play?

**ANSWER: Schools should be a place of learning and personal growth, and, if confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Education fulfills its critical role in ensuring all students, including students who are pregnant or parenting, have equal access to educational opportunity.**

17. As Secretary how will you work to eliminate the educational disparities that exist for students of color? How will you work with diverse communities to ensure that their perspective, knowledge and expertise are valued and utilized in the policies of the Department of Education?

**ANSWER: Seeing the lack of educational opportunities for students of color and other disadvantaged students is what inspired me to become involved in the education reform effort. I have worked with diverse communities across the country to expand educational**

**opportunities for all students, but particularly for students of color.**

18. Please describe how you will ensure that students with disabilities have access to accommodations provided by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, including the importance of oversight and enforcement provided by the Office of Civil Rights.

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will work with the Office for Civil Rights to enforce Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. I will also work with that office and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to learn more about what the Department could do better to support efforts to provide students appropriate accommodations.**

19. How would you ensure the family of a student who uses a voucher to attend a school other than the public school they would normally attend would not have to pay for access to Specialized Instructional Support Personnel and other related services to provide the student with the tools needed to graduate and succeed in a higher education institution or the workforce?

**ANSWER: I believe parents should have the freedom to choose between a high-quality public school, a public charter school, a magnet school, or a nonpublic school. I believe a competitive marketplace in our elementary and secondary education system will work as well as it does in our diverse higher education system, where colleges and universities compete for students, and students and their parents get to choose which school to attend. With a diverse array of good schools, every family should be able to find the best match of school for their child's individual needs. Just as the Pell Grant is not always enough to pay for the cost of tuition and fees at most institutions of higher education, vouchers in the K-12 arena sometimes fall short, but still provide meaningful support to enable students to attend the institution of their choice.**

20. If the goal of ESSA's annual assessments is to gauge the knowledge and skill of a student, do you support allowing students with disabilities to use assistive technology and other types of accommodations to access the assessment, provided these tools do not undermine the testing construct?

**ANSWER: I believe that we need to enable as many as students possible to participate in the state regular assessments. The Every Student Succeeds Act requires that, to the extent that is practical, all state assessments must be developed using the principles of universal design. For students with disabilities who receive accommodations under the IDEA, states must provide those accommodations on the state regular and alternate assessments. If confirmed, I will work with states to ensure that both laws are properly implemented.**

21. Do you believe that due process rights and protections are important to maintain for students with disabilities and their families? If yes, how do you reconcile this position with your position on private school vouchers, which supports federal funding to follow the child with disabilities but not these necessary protections?

**ANSWER: Yes. The procedural safeguards enshrined in IDEA for students with**

disabilities in public schools are essential to protecting their rights to the free, appropriate public education provided by IDEA, and I will continue to strongly enforce the law if I am confirmed as Secretary.

But I do not believe that there is a conflict between protecting IDEA and ensuring that those rights are enforced and offering parents a different opportunity. Offering parents of students with disabilities the opportunity to choose between a private school, a different public school, or a non-public school setting empowers the parents to receive what works best for their child. Just like in the public schools, not every private school will offer every service for every student with a disability. It would be misguided to seek to impose on individual private schools a standard that is also not imposed on every individual public school. If parents are not satisfied with the private options available, they maintain all their current options and rights within their local public school system. I believe that all students, including individuals with disabilities, deserve an equal opportunity to lead full, productive and successful lives.

22. What changes would you make to ensure family engagement for students with disabilities is improved in special education services?

**ANSWER:** I have heard from many frustrated parents that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has not well served their children. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to examine what reforms are needed to that law to make it work better for parents and educators. I will reach out to parents and advocates who have spent years working to make the public school system provide a better education for their child. I look forward to learning from them what improvements they would seek, and then working with Congress, Governors, state legislators and school districts to make those changes that would help improve opportunities for students with disabilities.

23. Please explain your views on the identification of students with learning disabilities and whether you believe the current federal policies outlining identification of specific learning disabilities are effective. How do you think we could strengthen early intervention services for all disabilities?

**ANSWER:** Many schools have made significant strides, through efforts like Response to Intervention, to improve the education and identification of students with learning disabilities. More can certainly be done. For students with the most common learning disability in reading and language, research suggests early intervention using evidence-based programs and strategies makes a big difference in ongoing achievement levels. ESSA and IDEA give schools flexibility to develop and implement these programs, and if confirmed, I will work with the Office of Special Education Programs and stakeholders to ensure that states and school districts are aware of this flexibility.

24. Please describe your plans as Secretary to support students, parents, educators, and schools to have access to special education and related services.

**ANSWER:** IDEA guarantees parents and their eligible children with disabilities access to



**special education and related services. If confirmed, I will work with the Office of Special Education Programs to ensure that IDEA is properly implemented and enforced, and I will work with Congress to explore any needed reforms to make IDEA work better.**

25. We know from decades of research that an inclusive classroom is the best for all students. Do you believe that students with disabilities should learn alongside their peers? How do you believe students with disabilities should be supported in general education classrooms?

**ANSWER: IDEA requires states to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. For most students, this means special education and related services in a fully inclusive classroom, and, if confirmed, I will work to ensure students' access to these classrooms is fully protected and that they have access to the supports and accommodations to which they are entitled. I will also work with stakeholders to ensure that IDEA is properly implemented to provide appropriate learning environments for those students for whom a fully inclusive classroom is not appropriate.**

26. Students with disabilities often exit the school system with little planning for transition from school to work or post-secondary education. What is your philosophy on transition services to help ensure career and postsecondary success for students with disabilities and how will your Department of Education support schools and states in supporting students during this critical time? What would you do to build on the improvements made in the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act?

**ANSWER: One of the best ways to help a child with a disability get a job or pursue postsecondary education is to ensure that they have the skills and resources they need to move on from high school. If confirmed, I will work with states, local school districts, employers, and institutions of higher education to identify best practices in transition services to ensure students with disabilities receive the help they need to pursue their postsecondary goals.**

**In addition, if confirmed, I will work with states to ensure full implementation of the provision in IDEA that requires students with disabilities by age 16 (at earlier) to have a transition plan that is "results oriented."**

**The reforms to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act require vocational rehabilitation agencies to work with schools to provide transition services to students with disabilities. If confirmed, I will work with the Rehabilitation Services Administration to ensure that these reforms are properly implemented.**

27. Parent Information Centers provide parents of children with disabilities free access to information related to the law and their child's rights. These PTIs are woefully under resourced. How do you plan on supporting the PTIs, if at all?

**ANSWER: Parents need good information to make informed decisions about their child's rights and educational plan. If confirmed, the Department will examine the effectiveness and efficiency of current outreach programs, centers, and events that focus**

**on providing parent information while also exploring new opportunities to use technology to improve this outreach. Our goal is to increase parent and family access to information across the range of essential issues, from evidence-based practices to legal rights for parents of students with disabilities.**

28. Describe your vision for how the public school system should address the needs of nearly 6 million children with disabilities, beyond offering school choice options. Should private schools receiving public dollars through vouchers meet the same standard of addressing those needs?

**ANSWER: I support great public schools and applaud the high quality education and services they provide to students with disabilities. Enforcing IDEA is a priority, and making sure that local school districts follow the law and provide the services and education that children with disabilities deserve is essential. At the federal level, we must encourage states to work with parents, schools and districts to create more effective IEPs that are useful for increasing learning gains for students with disabilities. IEPs must include measurable annual goals for monitoring progress and clear information for parents about student progress toward high but achievable expectations.**

**The IEP should be viewed as a practical blueprint for action. Students with disabilities are accomplishing great things in states and districts that recognize their uniqueness. We can shine a light on these successes so that others know what is possible. If confirmed as Secretary, I will make it a priority to highlight what works best for students with disabilities.**

**I also believe that parents should have the choice of school to attend, especially for children with disabilities. I will continue to look for ways to increase access by students with disabilities to a broader range of educational options. I have seen exciting changes in students with disabilities when they attend schools that meet their needs. My friends, Sam Myers and his mother Tera, attended my confirmation hearing last week. Sam, who has Down's Syndrome, was a Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship recipient. The program exemplifies how states can -- and do -- implement the federal law and use their flexibility to ensure parents can choose the learning environment in which their children with disabilities will achieve and thrive.**

29. I'm sure you're aware that most private school voucher programs permit schools to discriminate in their admission policies and refuse to admit students with a disabilities. As a result, students with disabilities are often systematically excluded from voucher programs. For instance, most private schools in the Milwaukee voucher program "lack the full complement of educational programs that students with disabilities are entitled to if they receive their education in the public sector," and as a result, students with disabilities have been discouraged or excluded from participating. This has also occurred in the District of Columbia. Do you believe private schools should be prohibited from denying admission to students with disabilities? Yes or no? If Yes: Then how would you hold private schools that receive federal education funding accountable for providing special education services and supports? If No: If families are left with no protections, which data shows is incredibly detrimental, how would

you ensure that students with disabilities were able to receive high quality services?

**ANSWER:** No educational program, public or private, is ideal for all students, especially students with disabilities. Even today, there are public school districts that do not have the services to meet the needs of all students with disabilities and suggest to those parents that they should enroll their children in nearby charter schools or the district arranges to have those students to go to another district to have their needs met. So, let's be honest. No individual public school provides the full of range of high quality services for every student with a disability; this is true for private schools as well.

Public school systems have the right to establish specialized programs at certain schools for students with specific disabilities and, through the IEP process, to assign students with specific disabilities to these schools to meet their needs more effectively. When this occurs, the public schools that do not offer these services within the system are not "discriminating" against the students with these disabilities.

In far too many cases, the parents of students with disabilities in the public schools are currently not satisfied with the services their children are receiving. In fact, public schools contract out educational services for almost 2% of students with special needs to ensure they receive their education in private schools where the student's educational needs are better met. But too often the only way that parents can obtain what is best for their child is through legal recourse. This can take months and sometimes years. Children don't have years to wait for courts to decide. I believe they should not have to wait.

Offering parents of students with disabilities the opportunity to choose between a private school, a different public school, or a non-public school setting empowers the parents to receive what works best for their child. Just like in the public schools, not every private school will offer every service for every student with a disability. It would be misguided to seek to impose on individual private schools a standard that is also not imposed on every individual public school. If parents are not satisfied with the private options available, they maintain all their current options and rights within their local public school system.

30. Studies in a number of states have indicated there has been systematic over representation of students of color in special education, specific categories of special education eligibility, and the use of discipline. What is your understanding of over representation or disproportionality of students of color in special education? If there is over or under representation, specifically how would your Department of Education address the issue? What is your understanding over representation of students of color in specific categories of eligibility for special education (e.g., intellectual disability)? If there is over representation in specific categories, specifically how would your Dept. of Education address the issue? What is your understanding of overuse of discipline procedures for students with disabilities, particularly students of color who have disabilities? Specifically, how would your Department of Education address the overuse of discipline procedures?

**ANSWER:** If confirmed, I will work with states, school districts, and other stakeholders to address overidentification of students of color in special education where it is occurring, and address discriminatory discipline practices that may rob students of their right to an education. IDEA requires such efforts, and I will work to ensure that the law is properly implemented and enforced.

31. Under your leadership, will the Department of Education enforce the disproportionality regulation? Please describe how you will enforce the regulation or your reasoning of why you will not enforce the regulation.

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will carefully review all new regulations to ensure they are consistent with the relevant statute as Congress wrote them and are necessary to enable successful implementation of federal law.**

32. ESSA made a number of changes designed to improve the continuum of learning from birth through 3rd grade. In particular, ESSA now allows for joint professional development between kindergarten and preschool teachers. How will you support this continuum if confirmed as Secretary of Education?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will work to implement the Every Students Succeeds Act and all laws as written. In this case, I will work to ensure states and school districts are aware of the flexibilities they have under ESSA to meet their unique local needs.**

33. Early childhood educators are the linchpin of quality in early childhood education. They benefit from strong professional development and higher education systems that help to prepare them with the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to be successful in caring for and educating our nation's youngest learners. As Secretary, what resources, regulations and policies will you direct towards supporting excellence in the teaching profession, beginning in the early years and continuing throughout K-3?

**Research is clear that early childhood education is important and can help put a child on a path to success. That is why it is exciting to see so many states invest in and support early education programs for families. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that states and school districts are aware of the flexibilities they have under federal law to meet their unique needs. I am also aware that the overwhelming majority of the federal government's early childhood efforts fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Health and Human Services. If confirmed, I will work with that Department as appropriate to support educators and students throughout the early grades.**

34. According to the 2013 National Survey of Early Care and Education, the median wage for center-based early childcare staff was \$9.30 an hour, or about \$19,000 a year. This means child care workers on average make less than parking lot attendants, manicurists, and massage therapists. One amazingly dedicated worker I met told me she had to choose between paying for food and her medicine. This problem is repeated in Head Start as well. We say that children are our most valuable resource, so we should be paying the individuals who take care of them accordingly. I believe high quality early learning opportunities for all children are critical for success later in life – if children learn more now, they'll earn more later. What will you do to help increase wages for our child care and early childhood workforce?

**ANSWER: This issue falls primarily under the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Department of Health and Human Services so I would respectfully defer to that agency. If confirmed, I will work with that Department as appropriate to improve coordination between our two agencies so we can help states and local school district maximize their**



**federal resources more efficiently.**

35. Given the critical need for more access to more high quality early learning services, how will you work to strengthen and expand our system of early learning so more children can receive high quality supports?

**ANSWER: This issue falls under the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Department of Health and Human Services so I would respectfully defer to that agency. If confirmed, I will work with that Department as appropriate to support educators and students throughout the early grades.**

36. Early childhood educators - including those working in publicly funded preschools - are often paid less than their equally qualified counterparts in K-12. Do you believe the pursuit of compensation parity is important? If yes, how would you support states to promote and implement policies that support it?

**ANSWER: This issue falls primarily under the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Department of Health and Human Services so I would respectfully defer to that agency. If confirmed, I will work with that Department as appropriate to improve coordination between our two agencies so we can help States and local school district maximize their federal resources more efficiently.**

37. Please describe whether you will support policies that support access to a regular high school diploma for the overwhelming majority of students with disabilities? What steps will you take to uphold the ESSA definition of 'regular high school diploma' as it relates to students with disabilities? Describe under what conditions you believe a lesser, non-regular diploma should be provided to students with disabilities.

**ANSWER: ESSA appropriately assumes the vast majority of students can obtain a regular high school diploma and requires states to incorporate graduation rates into state accountability systems. ESSA also acknowledges students with the most significant cognitive disabilities assessed using the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards may be awarded state-determined alternate diplomas. If confirmed, I will work to implement these provisions of ESSA.**

38. As our next Education Secretary, what would your priorities be regarding ESSA implementation?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation will be one of my top priorities. I will work with this Committee and stakeholders around the country to ensure implementation is carried out as the law was written. I would like to encourage states and local school districts to innovate and think outside the box on how better to improve education in their local communities.**

39. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a scientifically valid framework for creating and sustaining educational systems that are responsive to the needs of each learner, including the students in the many subgroups that are referenced in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),

by offering multiple ways of engaging students, representing information and demonstrations of mastery. ESSA recognizes UDL as a best practice in numerous sections of the law. It is the umbrella which encompasses many other strategies such as personalized learning and is the underpinning for the successful implementation of other strategies, such as multi-tiered systems of support and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). What would you do to encourage states to implement UDL in a robust way to ensure that the diversity inherent in all learners is addressed?

**ANSWER: Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies can be an effective tool for ensuring educational systems are appropriately tailored to the needs of all students. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages states and school districts to utilize UDL strategies where appropriate. If confirmed, I will work with states and school districts to ensure they understand the flexibilities they have under ESSA to implement UDL and other strategies to support all learners.**

40. In November 2015 the Department issued guidance indicating that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of a student with a disability must contain annual IEP goals that “are aligned with the State academic content standards for the grade in which [the] child is enrolled,” and must “include the specially designed instruction necessary to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability and ensure access of the child to the general education curriculum, so that the child can meet the State academic content standards that apply to all children.” How will you uphold this guidance and ensure IEP teams around the country are ensuring students with disabilities access to general education?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will carefully review all existing guidance to ensure that guidance is helpful to states, local school districts, teachers, school personnel, and others who implement federal education law.**

41. What is the role of Federal funding, including formula funds and discretionary grants, in supporting schools serving large numbers of low-income students and students of color?

**ANSWER: While federal funding makes up a relatively small percentage of all education funding, the purpose of most federal education funding is to support our nation’s most vulnerable children. I believe we can do better, though, in giving states and school districts sufficient flexibility to use those funds to best support the students the funding is intended to serve. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee to determine how best to utilize federal resources to support student learning.**

42. The College Scorecard, released in September 2015 by the Obama Administration, provided new data which could potentially be accountability measures for institutions of higher education. Data in the College Scorecard was from numerous datasets across the federal government and contained no personally identifiable information. If confirmed, will you continue to release the College Scorecard in its current form? Will you commit to maintaining public access to all of the data that is currently available on the College Scorecard? If not, please indicate which data items you plan to eliminate and your reasoning for why you do not believe students and taxpayers should be able to access each data point.

**ANSWER:** If confirmed, I will review the information that the Department currently collects from institutions and evaluate how that data aligns with requirements in the Higher Education Act, including determining what additional information may be necessary. Further, I will ensure that the information provided conforms with the requirements of the Higher Education Act for the College Navigator and college cost information.

43. Do you believe everyone should be able to go to college? Yes or no. If no, who do you think they should not be able to go to college? If no, who do you believe should choose who should not go to college?

**ANSWER:** Yes, I believe everyone should have the opportunity to pursue a college education if they believe it is the most appropriate postsecondary education option for them. I also believe greater access to high-quality career and technical education is needed, and that we need to explore other innovative postsecondary education options. Students should have a wide range of postsecondary options so they can identify the most appropriate opportunity for them.

44. Not all students who enter postsecondary education do so on an equal academic, financial, or emotional footing. Those who start with greater deficits will need more assistance to reach their potential. How will the Department of Education under your leadership work to advance and promote equitable outcomes among disparately impacted populations?

**ANSWER:** If confirmed, I will work with this Committee to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity for educational success. This has been my life's work in Michigan and around the country. I believe this starts by providing all students with an equal opportunity for a quality elementary and secondary education, so that fewer students enter postsecondary education needing remedial instruction.

If confirmed, I also look forward to working with this Committee to explore ways to provide support to students who have been poorly served by the elementary and secondary system.

45. Do you believe that liberal arts education, which cultivates knowledge that informs active citizenship, is at risk of becoming a domain restricted to highly selective private universities? Do you believe the federal government should support students that choose to enter into a liberal arts program?

**ANSWER:** I believe liberal arts education plays a vital role in our society and that all students need access to an education that prepares them for a career and to be engaged and informed members of society. One of the great things about our higher education system is that the federal government supports a broad array of postsecondary choices. What President Trump and I agree is students should be given good information to be able to make those choices wisely. We do not force students into one-size-fits-all education models or instructional programs.

46. The education, employment, and community outcomes for individuals with intellectual disability (ID) have historically been bleak in our country, with the vast majority living in poverty and relegated to subminimum wage jobs in sheltered workshops, or living at home with aging parents and little opportunity for productive work or activities. Prior to 2008, a number of higher education programs for students with ID had sprung up around the country, but there was no federal financial aid or federally funded technical assistance, and there were no model programs to encourage the expansion of this important educational movement. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) enacted in 2008 created exciting opportunities for students with ID to access certain forms of federal financial aid, and authorized new model Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs). A National Coordinating Center (NCC) was also authorized to provide technical assistance and evaluation of the TPSID projects and to develop model accreditation standards for such programs. According to a recent count, we now have 246 higher education programs in the United States, including new model programs due to the HEOA. As colleges and universities open their doors to students with ID, these individuals are experiencing substantially better outcomes in employment, social engagement, and community living. TPSIDs have been funded since FY2010 and the National Coordinating Center evaluation is showing very positive results, including favorable exit outcomes. For instance, the percentage of students who were engaged in employment or career development within 90 days of program exit has increased from 30% in FY2010 to 76% in FY2015. Will you support the continuation of TPSID model demonstration programs and a National Coordinating Center in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act? Will you support continued funding for the TPSIDs and NCC?

**ANSWER: You correctly point out the challenges students with intellectual disabilities (ID) have faced in pursuing postsecondary education opportunities and employment. If confirmed, I will work with the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions to ensure students with ID have opportunities to pursue education and work. I will work with this Committee and stakeholders to review all our efforts to support students with ID, including through the TPSID program, to ensure we strengthen successful efforts to improve student outcomes.**

47. Students with disabilities are graduating high school at higher rates than ever before and going on to higher education. Unfortunately, their graduation rate from college still lags behind students without disabilities. What will you do to ensure higher education is more accessible and responsive to the needs of students with disabilities? What will you do to help raise the graduation rate for students with disabilities?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will work with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the Office for Civil Rights, leaders of the higher education community, and representatives of the disability community to ensure that students receive the services and accommodations they are entitled to under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, and will learn more about what the Department could do better to help colleges and universities meet the needs of students with disabilities on their campuses.**



48. With regard to the ongoing application process for the new student loan servicing contract, what will you do to ensure that this process proceeds smoothly so that loan servicing is not disrupted when current contracts expire in 2019?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing existing policies and procedures currently underway at the Office of Federal Student Aid, comparing them to efficiencies used in the financial sectors, and implementing policies that ensure students and borrowers are receiving quality treatment and care that is responsive to individual needs while maintaining proper protections for taxpayers.**

49. In his New Deal for Black America, President-elect Trump has indicated that he will ensure funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which for over 100 years have played a major role in educating disadvantaged minorities for the workforce and leadership roles in society. Can you explain what this commitment means and how this will be achieved?

**ANSWER: President Trump acknowledges the important role Historically Black Colleges and Universities play in helping our country's youth achieve their dreams of a postsecondary education. These institutions should be commended for all the good work they accomplish. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other members of Congress to engage this community and help strengthen their efforts.**

50. Since graduate students no longer qualify for subsidized Stafford Loans, taking on student debt to pursue an advance degree has become challenging. Borrowers who plan to utilize Public Service Loan Forgiveness commit to a career of service for America while paying their loans on an income-driven plan. Can you guarantee that you will not support policies that will increase costs for graduate students or increase the burden of their student debt?

**ANSWER: I am very concerned about the rising costs of college. And I recognize the importance of graduate education. If confirmed as Secretary, I hope to put forward policies that will help lower student debt while also increasing access to postsecondary education, including graduate education. I look forward to a robust discussion on these issues during the upcoming reauthorization of the HEA.**

51. While the first recipients of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program will receive the benefits of the program in late 2017, it will be important to track this first group's progress of how they maintained their payments during these past 10 years and to take steps to address any confusion that may arise when borrowers submit the complex forms required for forgiveness and determine which payments qualified. Will you commit to reaching out to public service entities and borrowers who have submitted any PSLF documents in the past to provide them with guidance and support?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department is appropriately answering any technical assistance request we receive from entities or individuals interested in learning more about the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.**

52. In the 2015-2016 school year, 46 states recorded spending less per student for higher education than they did at the start of the recession. Thus, tuition costs at four-year public

colleges have risen by 33 percent since 2008. Prior to these tuition increases, studies identified that the share of students coming from communities of color at public two- and four-year colleges had risen significantly. In a study conducted at New York University, researchers found that with all else equal, a \$1,000 tuition increase for full-time undergraduate students is associated with a decrease in campus diversity of almost six percent. Do you believe that higher education today is reinforcing economic inequality? What will you do to reverse this trend toward excluding lower and middle income people from higher education?

**ANSWER: It takes a partnership between the federal government, states, institutions of higher learning, and families to ensure postsecondary education remains affordable. If confirmed, I will work with states to ensure that they are holding up their part of the bargain.**

**Additionally, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on reauthorization of the Higher Education Act to ensure that the federal student aid programs are flexible enough to meet the law's goals of providing students with access to postsecondary education.**

53. Data show that 70 percent of Income-Based Repayment participants and 83 percent of Pay As You Earn participants earned less than \$20,000 per year. How will you ensure that students do not default on their federal loans, and how will you expand these repayment plans for those from low-income backgrounds?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will work to ensure all students are aware of all the benefits, including the numerous repayment plans, associated with their federal student loans. I will also look forward to working with you and your colleagues to move forward with President Trump's campaign proposal to create a new income-driven repayment plan that will cap borrowers' repayment at 12.5% of their discretionary income and offer loan forgiveness after 15 years.**

54. I have heard from many constituents who are deeply concerned over the future of individuals protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. These young individuals who are protected under the DACA program were brought to the country as children by their parents, have never been in trouble with the law, and are frequently pursuing education or productively contributing to society. What would you do to reassure these young people they have nothing to fear and that they will be able to remain a vital part of the fabric of our nation?

55. If the Trump Administration rescinds the DACA policies, do you have a plan for DACA recipients who are currently pursuing higher education to remain at their institutions, continue with their education, work to support themselves, and, if applicable, maintain residency for in-state tuition and state financial aid? Please describe how you plan to address this issue.

**ANSWER 54-55: Enforcement of our nation's immigration laws falls under the responsibility and jurisdiction of the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security so I would respectfully defer to those agencies.**

56. What do you see as the necessary supports for providing a well-rounded education for our nation's children, including music and arts, in our nation's schools - be they district or charter schools? And what role does the federal government play in insuring those supports are available for all students and in all schools?

57. According to a recent National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), only 26 percent of Hispanics ages 18-24 surveyed reported getting any arts education, in comparison to 28 percent of African Americans and 59 percent of whites. Further, 3.9 million public elementary school students do not have access to visual arts classes and 1.3 million public elementary school students have no access to music classes. What policy measures can be put in place to create access for more minorities to receive a music and arts education?

**ANSWER to 56 and 57: In general, I believe it is best to defer to the judgment of state and local officials about how to implement education policies. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to share data, best practices, and strong research from the Department of Education with state and local officials so they can adapt it to their needs. But I also hope states and local leaders will think outside the box and innovate, looking for new solutions to vexing educational problems. Regarding arts and music education, I agree they can be an important part of a well-rounded education and hope that local education leaders can find new ways to expand student opportunities in these areas, particularly with the greater flexibility provided to states and local school districts.**

58. How do you propose to ensure that the rights of lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender students' under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act and students with disabilities under section 504 of the Rehab Act and Title II of the ADA aren't violated?

59. In the last fiscal year, the OCR continued to face an increasing number of complaints from students who attend schools that may have violated their civil rights, while at the same time working with a very low number of staff to handle enforcement. Under your leadership, will the Dept. continue to pursue the many complaints and compliance reviews that will be pending with OCR at the time of the transition between administrations? Will you prioritize funding for this critical office?

**ANSWER 58-59: The Office for Civil Rights has an important mission to play in enforcing the law. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department enforces the law appropriately to protect all of our nation's students. I will look closely at the budget of the Department of Education to determine the best allocation of taxpayer dollars when proposing budgets for future fiscal years.**

60. The Office of Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection has provided parents, educators, and policymakers with invaluable data on critical issues that impact a student's access to a meaningful education. Do you support the continuation of this collection? If yes, please explain how you will ensure that this data is provided to parents & public in a transparent way, and how you will use the findings to inform policy decisions. If no, how do you intend to provide parents, educators and policymakers with data on key issues?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will carefully review all existing data collections conducted by the Department to ensure that they serve as a helpful tool and provide meaningful information.**

61. Over the last eight years, OCR has enhanced transparency by posting on its website many more resolution agreements and letters, policy guidance documents, technical assistance materials and information about OCR's enforcement processes. Will you commit to continuing such transparency in the Department's publications and online resources so that Congress and the public can readily track the Department's enforcement of each anti-discrimination law?

**ANSWER: I believe in transparency and accountability. If confirmed, I will carefully examine this issue before making such a commitment, but I look forward to discussing this with you after I have studied this further.**

62. How should charter schools be monitored by the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act? Should charter schools be held to different standards for compliance than traditional public schools? If so, why? What should be the standard for compliance for charter schools and how do you legally justify such a difference?

**ANSWER: Charter schools are public schools and are subject to the same standards of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as traditional public schools.**

63. The Rehabilitation Services Administration is located within the US Department of Education and implements the multi-billion dollar Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program that helps adults with disabilities obtain employment and access independent living supports. Despite its budget, not every eligible adult can access VR services. Moreover, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the unemployment rate for adults with disabilities is 10 percent compared to the general population rate of 4.2 percent. What specific actions will you take to increase the employment rate of adults with disabilities? [sic]

**ANSWER: I believe the underemployment of individuals with disabilities speaks volumes about low expectations. If confirmed, I am interested in working with Congress, states, and other stakeholders to conduct a complete examination of the VR programs to improve effectiveness and efficiency.**

64. In recent years, Congress has made significant progress toward preparing youth and young adults with disabilities to succeed in the 21st century workforce. The workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was a shining example of bi-partisan legislation that will empower a future generation of workers with disabilities. Although, we can't ignore the millions of older working age adults who find themselves faced with an age related disability like blindness or significant hearing loss, and who do not have the resources to retire early or sustain themselves on our safety net programs. To this end, are you committed to strengthening our rehabilitation system in a manner that provides opportunity for the millions of Americans who have worked hard their entire life, but find their labors threatened by the onset of an age related disability? If so, what pathways do you envision as a solution through the department's Rehabilitation



Services Administration?

**ANSWER: If confirmed as Secretary, I look forward to working with Congress, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, states, and other stakeholders to review ways to increase access to services and materials for individuals with age related disabilities.**

65. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services has promoted inclusion, equity and opportunity. Please explain whether you intend to uphold this focus and what changes in direction, if any, you envision. Additionally, please explain how your policy direction will embrace these areas.

**ANSWER: I agree that inclusion, equity, and opportunity are important principles in working with individuals with disabilities. If confirmed, I will review the actions and guidance of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and determine what, if any, changes need to be made. I will also consult with the President's nominees for Assistant Secretary and Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services when nominated.**

66. In 2014, the Department of Education announced a revised accountability system called Results-Driven Accountability (RDA), which the Department would shift its accountability efforts from a primary emphasis on compliance to a framework that would focus on improved results for students with disabilities. RDA emphasizes student outcomes such as performance on assessments and graduation rates. Should the Department maintain its focus on outcomes for students with disabilities through RDA, or do you think the Department should discontinue RDA? Why or why not? If the Department discontinues RDA, will it continue to hold states and school districts accountable for the outcomes of students with disabilities? How? If the Department maintains RDA, how will it hold states and school districts accountable for the outcomes of students with disabilities?

**ANSWER: I believe in accountability for all students, including students with disabilities. If confirmed, I will review the actions and guidance of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and determine what, if any, changes need to be made.**

67. Following a 2012 Government Accountability Office report, various federal agencies have acknowledged that they must better coordinate programs to support the needs of individuals with disabilities. This will require deliberate, strategic program alignment. Please explain how you intend to further this necessary work.

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will review the 2012 GAO Report. But in general I agree government needs to improve its efforts to support the needs of people with disabilities. I look forward to working with my colleagues to find ways that the Trump Administration can improve those services and help Americans with disabilities thrive.**

68. Historically, the Personnel Preparation program, funded through the Office of Special Education Programs, has had a demonstrated impact on increasing the number of special education teachers produced in states. Additionally, this program has produced thousands of special education faculty members who are responsible for preparing special education

teachers and conducting the intervention work that has been so vital to schools. Do you believe that funding for this program should be continued at its current level and even increased? Will you work with the President and Congress to ensure that funds available for this program are maintained at current levels or increased?

**ANSWER: If confirmed I will work with Congress to evaluate effective ways to increase the number of qualified special education teachers. Having an effective teacher is essential to student success.**

69. As you may be aware, the House and Senate came close last Congress to passing a reauthorization of the Perkins Career & Technical Education Act, which I spent a great deal of time working on. We were able to get agreement on a lot of positive areas like greater employer involvement, streamlined requirements for participating schools, support for innovation, and greater supports for individuals with disabilities. We were unable to agree on the issue of secretarial authority. Like many in PA, I believe that the Secretary of Education should maintain oversight of state CTE performance targets that has existed in Perkins for decades. Do you have any ideas on how we can further enhance the areas of agreement I've outlined above?

**ANSWER: Career and technical education programs are vital for many students who need the skills to enter into quality employment upon completion of their program. As such, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you, the Committee, and the Congress as the debate to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act unfolds.**

70. Some in the manufacturing community say there are many jobs that could come back to the US, if the US had a workforce with the baseline academic and nonacademic skills needed to be trained in new technologies. How can the Department of Education under your tenure provide leadership in this area?

**ANSWER: As a proponent of local control, I believe that those closest to student and to the needs of regional economies have the best knowledge about the types of training needed to close the skills gap. If confirmed as Secretary, I would welcome the opportunity to work with Congress as you reauthorize the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. Additionally, as Secretary I can share data, best practices, and strong research with state and local officials so they can adapt it to their particular needs. But I also hope that states and local leaders will think outside the box and innovate, looking for new solutions to vexing educational problems. If I can be a resource to help as Secretary, I would welcome that opportunity.**

71. Today's global economy demands investment in a highly qualified and technical workforce. While more women are working more than ever before, they tend to be overwhelmingly clustered in low-wage, low-skill jobs. In many high-wage, high-skill fields, women's representation falls well below the 25 percent threshold. Equitable opportunity to high-wage, high-skill fields is critical to ensuring that the United States remains competitive and continues to meet the needs of the nation's evolving high-tech workplaces. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act includes critical gender equity provisions

intended to increase the number of women in nontraditional careers. How do you plan to enforce performance measures and ensure states are taking aggressive steps to increase women's enrollment and completion in nontraditional careers?

**ANSWER: I agree reauthorization of the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act is an important priority, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions along with other interested members of Congress to update and improve the law. I believe we should work to align federal laws to ensure consistency across programs, reduce duplication and unnecessary requirements, and provide a seamless set of policies. It is also important to provide flexibility at the state and local level so local officials on the ground can create and run programs educate students to attain the skills needed to work in those in-demand jobs. Finally, I support transparency of data so parents, students, and other taxpayers can see how well their programs are working.**

72. Given your limited managerial experience with public school systems and higher education, if confirmed, will you commit to appointing undersecretaries and assistant secretaries with deep experience working in and managing public school systems and institutions of higher education?

**ANSWER: Leadership skills and experience are transferrable. If confirmed, I commit to putting a team of highly capable and experienced individuals together to work on behalf of all students of all ages and life-stages.**

73. As Secretary, will you commit to strengthening and investing in the public system – and keeping it public?

**ANSWER: I am a strong supporter of public education, and will continue to look for ways to support and strengthen our public schools so that all children receive a high quality education. In addition, I support great schools in all forms—public, nonpublic, magnet, home, religious, and virtual. If confirmed, I will work with states to increase educational opportunities to ensure that all students have equal access to a quality education.**

74. A recent report indicated that, in Michigan, special education students in both Michigan's traditional public schools and Michigan's charter schools made significantly smaller gains in proficiency in reading and math than students not receiving special education services. But charter school students with disabilities made significantly smaller gains in both reading and math than did students at traditional public schools. Why do these disparities exist in Michigan? Do you think these disparities are a problem? Why or why not? What, if anything, should the Department of Education do about such disparities in academic achievement between special education students in charter schools and special education students in traditional public schools?

**ANSWER: The enrollment percentage of special education students in Detroit is 16% in DPS and 9% in charter schools, with roughly 1,100 (or 10% of special education students) enrolled in center-based programs outside of DPS or charter buildings. The**

statewide average is 11.8%.

While proficiency rates of special education students at DPS schools and in charters are very similar, data from the 2015 CREDO study showed smaller learning gains for special education students in charters when compared to DPS, and it was the only subgroup to have this performance. This was the first known comparison of these particular students, and we're looking forward to a deeper dive into this particular issue.

As you know, each child with a disability faces unique circumstances and Individualized Education Programs vary for each child. It's entirely possible that the future reports of the study will show that these problems have been corrected. We also know that academic progress can take time. Sometimes students do not make progress in the year when they change a school, only to make dramatic improvements in future years after they have acclimated. Other times the school proves not to be a good fit, and the parents decide to move their child to another school.

However, if confirmed, I would work with the state of Michigan to maintain vigilance on this issue, and encourage them to include this in their monitoring and enforcement systems to ensure that students with disabilities are being provided the services they need to make appropriate learning gains.

75. What do you think are some of the main challenges faced by teachers in today's classrooms? What about the teaching profession as a whole? What do you think would be the best strategy for improving teachers skills so that they are better able to drive student learning?

**ANSWER:** Educating, training and preparing great teachers is critical work. All students, including our special education students, deserve effective teachers to help them achieve and succeed. If confirmed, I will work with states, universities, colleges of education and other stakeholders to ensure we have a strong pipeline of well-prepared and effective teachers to meet the important demands of today's student population. We must also strive to attract new teachers to the workforce to address the teacher shortage in urban and rural schools.

76. Teacher turnover is a significant problem in many high need schools and high need fields. Research tells us that a large degree of teacher turnover has a negative impact on student performance. As Secretary of Education, how would you envision reducing teacher turnover and extending the retention of teachers in the profession so that our workforce is more experienced, particularly for high need schools and students?

**ANSWER:** I agree that reducing teacher turnover is an important part of improving educational outcomes for students and I look forward to further conversations with stakeholders. As a proponent of local control, I believe state and local officials know best how to implement policies to improve teacher recruitment and retention. If confirmed I would welcome the opportunity to share data, best practices, and strong research from the Department of Education and other agencies with state and local officials so they can adapt it to their particular needs. But I also hope that states and local leaders will think



**outside the box and innovate, looking for new solutions to vexing educational problems.**

77. Do you think teachers are paid too much or too little? Why? Do you think paying teachers more for their work would change the profession? Why or why not?

**ANSWER: Teacher compensation is a decision made at the local level. I would certainly encourage local school districts to use their resources wisely and pay teachers what they can within the constraints of their budgets.**

78. Under what circumstances do you believe a school or college receiving federal funds would not be required to follow parts or all of Title IX, which bans discrimination against students and educational professions on the basis of their gender? Please provide facts, legislative history, statute, regulation, and public policy reasons that support your answer.

**ANSWER: Schools that receive federal funds must comply with federal laws. But in some cases institutions may choose to use the exemption that is provided in the statute to exempt themselves from Title IX or parts of it. If confirmed, I will enforce the laws under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education.**

79. If the Department receives a complaint from a transgender student that she has been bullied severely at her school after coming out as transgender, and the student and her family asked the school repeatedly and the school did nothing about the bullying, and the student is now suffering every day and struggling in classes—is that a case the Department should investigate for possible violations of Title IX?

**ANSWER: Bullying and harassment of any student should not be tolerated. Schools should be an environment of learning and, if confirmed, I will work with the First Lady, who has indicated she intends to make this issue a priority, and state and local school officials to prevent bullying and harassment.**

**If a school is failing to protect any student from bullying and harassment and a complaint is made to OCR, I would expect that office to investigate as required under the law.**

**While the focus on bullying is important, it is also important to focus on encouraging positive behavior. Simply put, let's share best practices which encourage students to be kind, civil and treat everyone with dignity and respect.**

80. How will you work with states, LEAs and schools to ensure that they have the resources necessary to support the work of Title IX coordinators through training, education, and outreach to students and employees about Title IX?

**ANSWER: I will look closely at the budget of the Department of Education to determine the best allocation of taxpayer dollars to programs when proposing budgets for future fiscal years**

81. Are you in favor of expanding the Child Care Access Means Parents In School program, which provides childcare grants for colleges with high concentrations of student parents?

**ANSWER: I will look closely at the budget of the Department of Education to determine the best allocation of taxpayer dollars to programs when proposing budgets for future fiscal years, and will consider carefully the financial needs of students and parents.**

82. If a student enrolled in a virtual school requires behavioral interventions, how is this need addressed and who is responsible for ensuring effective implementation of interventions? When a student's disability requires related services such as speech or occupational therapy, who is responsible for paying for this and providing the services and how? When a student with a disability requires accommodations to access an online learning environment, who is responsible for providing the accommodations and ensuring access?

**ANSWER: All public schools are obligated to provide special education and related services to IDEA-eligible students. This includes virtual public schools. Like any other school, the virtual school would work with parents as part of an IEP process to determine what services the child needs, how they will be provided, and who will provide them. And the IEP team would periodically review the services to ensure the child is making appropriate progress. Parents that have chosen a virtual public school are entitled to the same IDEA protections as any other child.**

83. Public education is one of the cornerstones of our nation. Public schools serve students of all economic, geographic, ethnic, religious, gender, and racial backgrounds. History has shown that American public schools are a significant unifying factor in our society, bringing together students of diverse backgrounds. What are your top three priorities for strengthening public education in the United States?

**ANSWER: As a strong supporter of public schools, I will use evidence-based best practices to encourage strong accountability, high achievement, and successful school leaders and teachers. While in general I believe it is best to defer judgment to state and local officials about how best to improve public education, if confirmed, I will welcome the opportunity to share data and good research from the Department of Education with state and local officials looking to improve educational opportunities.**

84. What accountability measures or quality controls would you recommend regarding where vouchers may be used, such as only at schools with proven records of success? [sic]

85. You have advocated to allow for Title I dollars to be used for private school vouchers. I strongly oppose this idea and during ESEA reauthorization, it was an idea that was not supported by Congress and left out of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Will you respect the will of Congress and agree not to pursue, in any form, a policy that Congress has explicitly rejected including shifting Title I dollars to private vouchers?

86. If for whatever reason, a student leaves a private school whose tuition was paid for, at least in part, with federal funding, before finishing out the academic school year, should the school be required to return the remaining money? If no, why not?

87. If a school voucher program was enacted at the state or federal level, what oversight

would your Department of Education recommend so as to ensure that students with disabilities, students of minority faiths and no faith, and LGBT students receive the same legal protections they would be afforded in public schools?

**ANSWER to 84–87: President Trump has made a robust school choice proposal a centerpiece of his platform, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you on our proposal and hope to convince you to support the legislation. When we have more details I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the proposal and see if we can develop a consensus.**

88. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) strengthened the Rehabilitation Act to increase emphasis on employer involvement in the vocational rehabilitation program. WIOA added a new section that permits state vocational rehabilitation agencies to use their federal grants to target relationships with employers. Based on your experience as an employer and the laws protecting the employment rights of people with disabilities, what recommendations do you have for the vocational rehabilitation program to improve outreach and services to employers?

**ANSWER: From my experience as an employer, I have found working with local business and civic groups to inform employers is a good way to create greater awareness of vocational rehabilitation programs.**

89. Youth with disabilities are often denied the opportunities to learn job skills through work in their youth and early adulthood, leading to unemployment and underemployment throughout their lives. How would your Department engage youth with disabilities in pre-employment opportunities that will lead to successful transitions from school to work or higher education? How would you ensure that the public workforce system fully integrates people with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, into the economic development of regional economies?

**ANSWER: The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is very disturbing and something President Trump and I, if confirmed, would like to work with Congress to find bipartisan solutions to remedy at the pre-employment and employment levels.**

90. How will you ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for states and programs to successfully implement the programmatic changes required by Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act?

**ANSWER: If confirmed, I will look closely at the budget of the Department of Education to determine the best allocation of taxpayer dollars to programs when proposing budgets for future fiscal years.**

91. Will you pledge to protect and expand the Pell Grant which has been such a bedrock support for first generation and low income college students?

**ANSWER: I look forward to working with you, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the Congress during the debate of the**

**reauthorization of the Higher Education Act to ensure that the federal role of access remains a core goal of that law.**

92. What are your views on the current Title IV student aid programs? Will you seek to make changes to any of these programs either through the budget/appropriations process or reauthorization process?

**ANSWER: The federal aid program includes several areas of confusion, first among them is the number of repayment options, and number of income-driven repayment options. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to reduce the confusion in the federal aid system, including repayment options, so that students and families may better understand and navigate the programs and to provide borrowers with the opportunity to repay their loans at reasonable amount for a reasonable period of time**

93. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), provides rigorous and independent research and evaluation on our nation's education programs. What are your views on IES and will you pledge to support it?

**ANSWER: IES is an important component of the Department of Education, and serves a valuable role in providing high-quality research to benefit the country. If confirmed, I look forward to finding ways to help translate that research into effective practice.**

94. What do you specific actions do you believe could be taken to improve struggling rural schools?

**ANSWER: Clearly, more can be done to support rural schools. Many of our rural communities have not shared in the same economic prosperity of our urban and suburban areas. Schools serving these communities and populations continue to face unique challenges, including, but not limited to, resources, staffing, and services for students.**

**I am pleased with the steps Congress took under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to reauthorize the Rural Education Assistance Program (REAP) and other provisions in the law to provide more flexibility to rural school districts in how they apply and compete for, as well as combine and utilize, federal funding to meet local needs. I look forward to helping states and rural school districts fully take advantage of the change in the law.**

**More and more, technology can bring greater and richer content to classrooms, both rural and urban. Access to the requisite infrastructure to enable these innovations is an important conversation for the current Administration and Congress.**

**It is my understanding, that even at the U.S. Department of Education, competitive grants often ignore the realities of rural areas or unintentionally exclude them based on their requirements.**



95. The Kirwan Report issued in 2013 presents views on the regulation of higher education as well as specific policy recommendations. What plans, if any, do you have for implementing or supporting Congressional action based on the recommendations included in the report?

**ANSWER: I applaud the bipartisan group of Senators that put together this Commission and the work that the Commission did. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee to develop a specific plan for implementation of these recommendations, as well as reviewing and evaluating those items the report identifies the Department can address on its own.**

96. There have been policy proposals from within the Trump Administration that suggest privatizing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The CPB plays a critical role in supporting public television across Pennsylvania and the nation. Given the overlap between the Department of Education and CPB, do you support privatization?

**ANSWER: I would respectfully refer you to Congressman Mulvaney, President Trump's nominee for the Office of Management and Budget, for any answer to that question.**