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Q1 Candidate's Name

Theresa Mah

Q2 Candidate's District

House District 2

Q3 Will you support closure of any State Operated Developmental Centers and shift corresponding resources toward integrated, community-based living options? **Yes**

Q4 Would you support legislation to eliminate the subminimum wage for workers with disabilities in Illinois? **Yes**

Q5 Do you support per-beneficiary funding caps in the Illinois Medicaid system? **No**

Q6 Should Illinois Medicaid and SNAP benefits have a mandatory work component? **No**

Q7 Would you advocate raising Medicaid reimbursement rates for home-based nursing services? **Yes**

Q8 Do you support a fair (graduated) income tax? **Yes**

Q9 Will you demand improved disability access to the State Capitol complex and General Assembly, including but not limited to a formal reasonable accommodation request process for public proceedings, provision of key materials in alternate formats, and captioning of floor proceedings? **Yes**

Candidate's Questionnaire 2018

Q10 What will you do to ensure people with disabilities, who identify as members of other marginalized communities (e.g. black/brown, LGBTQ, immigrant, etc.) know they are welcome to live and pursue their full potential in Illinois? In other words, how can you address systemic oppression against multiply marginalized disabled people?

As a person of color from an immigrant family who represents a predominantly immigrant, low income district with a high proportion of seniors and people with disabilities, it has always been a priority for me to fight for equity, inclusion, civil rights and equality for everyone. Intersectionality has always been something I understand and take seriously. I believe in addressing the systematic oppression against multiply marginalized disabled people by supporting policies that attempt to dismantle the intersecting structures of inequality that keep us all oppressed.

Q11 How will you ensure a free and appropriate public education for Illinois students with disabilities?

I feel strongly that public resources should only be used for our public education system because that is the system that is open to everyone. Students with disabilities deserve equal access to our public education system and cannot be allowed to duck their legal responsibilities with regard to serving disabled students. I will always make sure that school districts, ISBE, CPS adhere to the highest standards when serving disabled students.

Q12 How will you work to expand affordable, accessible, integrated housing options in Illinois?

I support efforts to close state-run institutions and shift the money saved into building more integrated, community-based, housing options. I have an organization in my district that operates community-based homes for people with disabilities and I will continue to support them and advocate for their growth to meet the increasing need, especially for cultural appropriate, linguistically sensitive communities. In addition, I am a champion of affordable housing, so making sure that housing is affordable for people with disabilities is already part of efforts I am involved with.

Q13 What would you do to make Illinois more compliant with the Ligas, Williams, and Colbert Consent Decrees?

I would make sure that the incoming administration understands how important these consent decrees are and push them to appoint people who care about making the state more compliant and want to change the fact that our state is close to last in the nation in our level of funding for people with disabilities.

Q14 How will you play a role in making business accessible to all customers with disabilities?

I would make sure that if there is a way for the state to strengthen businesses' adherence to the ADA, we do that. And that there is a way to more effectively monitor compliance.

Q15 What will you do to provide full and equal access to public transportation in Illinois?

I have been a longtime advocate for more public transportation options. The first step is to increase funding for our public transit systems. I have pending legislation that is designed to increase transit ridership, which would help with funding for these systems. But pushing for full and equal access is important, and transit agencies need to make sure that their systems serve everyone and their stations, equipment, and routes are fully accessible to all.

Q16 How can wages for Illinois' Personal Assistants, Direct Support Professionals, Community Care Program and Homemaker service providers be improved and/or stabilized?

All of these wages need to be improved! I believe that social services need to have a protected source of funding much like the transportation "lockbox" so that they are not always the first services to be cut during a budget crisis. But structurally, our form of revenue collection needs to change so that our budgeting can be more sustainable. That's why I support a graduated income tax. In the meantime, we need to keep fighting in each budget cycle to make sure that wages and reimbursement rates can increase to reflect the value that we need to place on our caretakers and social service infrastructure.

Q17 Illinois has 19,000+ residents with disabilities on the PUNS (Prioritization for Urgency of Need for Services) waiting list. Thousands more are waiting for DON (Determination of Need) assessments to become eligible for home and community-based care. What concrete steps will you support to reduce these backlogs and improve Illinois' laggard status (we rank #47) when it comes to home-based disability services for eligible Illinoisans?

In some of the previous answers I discussed the need to shift our funding priorities so that social services are not the first budget lines to be cut. We also need to restructure our revenue collection so that the wealthy pay their fair share and we can have more resources to find our social service needs. In the previous administration there were some efforts to shift some money towards whittling down the PUNS list, but the delays in closing state institutions and the change in administration halted that process. I believe we need to prioritize these issues. Increasing the appropriation to reduce the backlog by hiring more staff at IDHS is one concrete step. increasing the reimbursement rates and helping to stabilize providers so that they do not shut down is another step. Figuring out effective ways to make the state more compliant with the relevant consent decrees is another. I would support all of these steps. It is shameful that our state is ranked close to last when it comes to home-based disability services.
