1. In which ways have you supported the disability community in the past, and how do you plan to continue your support in the future?

Answer:

As President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for the past six years, I passed legislation to improve disabled accessibility into commercial buildings and small businesses by expediting permitting for accessibility improvements, to require commercial landlords to bring entrances into compliance with existing ADA law, and to increase awareness of small business ADA obligations. I was proud to be the first Supervisor to deliver city funding for NEXT Village programs that allow seniors and people with disabilities to continue to live integrated within the communities they have long called home, as well as prioritize funding during multiple budget years for programs serving our seniors and people with disabilities. I also voted to invest significant resources to make our Board of Supervisors’ legislative chamber accessible to individuals with disabilities.

I am proud that I have received the sole endorsement of the FDR Democratic Club—San Francisco’s only Democratic organization representing the interests of seniors and people with disabilities—in recognition of the work I have done with the disability community on the Board of Supervisors. If elected, I will continue to champion
policies to support the disability community, as described in the answers below.

2. Do you support the right of a person with a disability to live independently in the community? If so, what would your approach be to ensure people can transition from nursing homes to living on their own?
   Answer:

   I absolutely support this right. Policy makers in Sacramento need to envision creative approaches to building livable, healthy communities for our residents that take into account the needs of the disability community. As the President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, I have been a champion for the idea of aging in place programs helping senior and disabled remain in their community and successfully advocated during recent budgets to support so-called NEXT Villages that provide residents with assistance regarding errands and everyday tasks. I have also been a champion for funding for home care services, critical for seniors and persons with disabilities to help them continue to live in their homes. I will continue to champion these policies in Sacramento.

3. How will you support students with disabilities to receive an equitable, quality education if you are elected?
   Answer:

   One of my top priorities is to make sure that California no longer ranks 49 out of 50 states when it comes to how much we spend per student in our public schools. To ensure all students in California have access to a quality education, we need to ensure that all of our schools and educational institutions have access to the funding they need. I support reforming California’s Proposition 13, which is the cause of many of our education funding challenges. Since Prop 13
was passed in the 1970s, property tax revenues for education have dropped by 60% in California.

As we work to better fund our schools, it is also important that we continue to support policies like the Local Control Funding Formula that ensure resources are going to the students who need them the most. Promoting equitable education means that we are funding programs that can adequately serve the needs of pupils with disabilities, as well as the needs of non-English speaking students and students from low-income backgrounds. I am committed to making sure California becomes a state where every student has access to an education that works for them, regardless of the unique circumstances they face.

4. How would you propose to build the capacity of the In Home Supportive Services program to sustain opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities to live independently in their communities.

Answer:

On the Board of Supervisors, I worked closely with homecare workers to make sure that our local budget reversed proposed cuts to IHSS. Homecare workers provide a crucial service to the most vulnerable members of our community who require care and support. I am committed to fighting to preserve this program that so many San Franciscans count on for their home needs. If elected to the Assembly, I would work hard with my colleagues in Sacramento to restore these services and ensure we are adequately funding IHSS and similar programs that serve seniors and people with disabilities.

5. What would you do to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to have access to affordable and accessible housing?

Answer:
Increasing access to affordable housing is my number one priority for Sacramento, as a tenant who chaired the board of an affordable housing nonprofit and has a long record of fighting for affordable housing on our Board of Supervisors; for example, I successfully championed local legislation to build more affordable housing for homeless veterans and seniors. There’s no question that cities like San Francisco are in the midst of an extreme housing affordability crisis that is driving many of our long-time residents from the city. In order to address our housing crisis, we need to create a new, stable source of state funding for affordable housing construction in San Francisco and across California to replace money that has been lost with the elimination of state redevelopment agencies and Prop 1C affordable housing funds that have run out. I would propose a statewide affordable housing bond measure for this purpose.

As we work to build new affordable housing, it is important that we make sure this housing is serving the communities and individuals who need it the most. I would be happy to support policies that would guarantee state affordable housing resources are spent on programs that serve people with disabilities.

6. What will you do to ensure that people with disabilities are part of the planning and oversight systems for upgrading public transportation systems in California?
Answer:

In San Francisco, I recently worked closely with disability advocates to help halt a proposed change in policy by our city’s transit authority that would have resulted in greatly reduced transit accessibility in San Francisco. If elected to the Assembly, I will continue to make sure that the disability community has a seat at the table when it comes to planning decisions that impact transportation—just as I have done throughout my time on the Board of Supervisors.
7. What would you do to increase job training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities?

Answer:

As President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, I have been one of our city’s leading proponents for apprenticeship and job training programs, and I have seen first hand the impact that these types of programs have in creating strong career paths for some of our most vulnerable residents. I would continue advocating for expanding job training programs in Sacramento, and would make sure that these programs were accessible for young people with disabilities.

I have also been a strong supporter of the local disability advocates’ efforts to highlight the serious challenges facing people with disabilities seeking employment. At a recent San Francisco Board of Supervisors’ hearing on the topic, I supported work that advocates are doing on this issue and pressed city officials to take more significant action in this area. At the state level, to overcome the employment challenges facing people with disabilities, Sacramento should consider policies like San Francisco’s Civil Service Rule 115 that can lead to a track record of successfully hiring and promoting people with disabilities.

8. What would you do to protect the rights of people with disabilities to have access to elections and cast an independent and private vote?

Answer:

Ensuring every Californian can equally and fairly take part in our democratic process is central to strengthening our communities. As an Assemblymember, I would work with my colleagues in the legislature and the Secretary of State to continue increasing voting rights protections for people with disabilities. This would include supporting policies that would make mail-in, Braille and large print
ballots more accessible, as well as working to expand the number of accessible polling places statewide.

9. What will you do to ensure that upcoming changes in healthcare delivery for people with disabilities will maintain the integrity and consistency of care on which they have relied?

With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, more Californians than ever before are beginning to qualify for assistance through our state’s Medi-Cal program, but we need to ensure that our state services are fully equipped to manage this influx and provide quality and reliable care to some of our most vulnerable residents. I successfully championed a resolution at San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors opposing Governor Brown’s continued 10% cuts to Medi-Cal; we need to ensure that with ACA implementation, health care remains accessible to people with disabilities.

10. In your view, do you think CA is spending too much, too little or just the right amount of its resources to support people with disabilities? Please explain.
Answer:

California is currently spending too little on the resources that are vital to our residents with disabilities. Unfortunately, during times of tight state budgets, our legislators have been far too willing to make cuts in areas of education, healthcare and emergency services as well as vital social programs that impact not just the disability community, but our seniors, unemployed residents, at-risk youth, and others. As an Assemblymember, I would work to restore these cuts. I would also champion smart budget reform, as I have done as President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, to ensure that during strong economic periods, California saves resources for tougher times so that we don’t have to make these cuts in the first place.