



## CANDIDATE FOR U.S. SENATE SURVEY

1. **Counsel:** When making decisions regarding services, programs and laws that could impact people with disabilities, who do you turn to for advice and counsel?

**As a member of Congress, I have a team that includes staff who specialize in healthcare and disability-related issues. My office frequently consults with state and national disability advocacy organizations regarding potential legislation, public letters, and votes related to disability issues on the House floor. As Senator, I would continue to have staff that specializes in healthcare and disability-related issues as well as maintain and further build out my relationships with disability advocacy organizations. I will be listening to Texans, including Texans with disabilities, on these and other issues as Senator.**

2. **Legacy:** What legacy and/or contribution do you hope the disability community remembers you for?

**In my discussions with Texans, I've spoken about my commitment to the right for people with disabilities to live in their homes and communities, their right to education, their right to meaningful employment and to vital services including Medicaid and Social Security. I've spoken about the valuable contributions that people with disabilities have made to our communities, our culture, and our nation. Disability rights are civil rights and I've made it a priority to support legislation consistent with that principle.**

3. **Community Integration:** In the *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that requires states to eliminate unnecessary segregation of persons with disabilities and to ensure that persons with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. What more, if anything, can the State of Texas do to implement this requirement?

**As a cosponsor of the Disability Integration Act at the federal level, I support legislation that will accelerate the implementation of the requirements of the *Olmstead v L.C.* decision in Texas and across the country. I am also a co-sponsor of the EMPOWER Care Act, to reauthorize the Money Follows The Person Demonstration program, which supports states in transitioning individuals from institutions into the community.**

4. **Housing:** Medicaid provides essential services and supports, but, by law, typically cannot pay for a person's housing costs. Programs operated by the Department of Housing and



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Urban Development  
(HUD) help make

housing affordable (through rent subsidies) and help create new affordable, accessible, integrated housing. These include HUD's Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program and Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. Despite these programs, the need for affordable, accessible, integrated housing for people with disabilities is far greater than the availability. What action, if any, would you take to increase access to affordable, accessible, integrated housing for Texans with disabilities?

**I support an expansion of HUD's Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities and Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher programs. In addition, I support increasing the federal minimum wage to \$15 and the phase out of subminimum wages for people with disabilities, helping extremely low income renters with disabilities raise their financial ability to access housing.**

5. **Voting:** Section 7 of the National Voter Registration Act expands voter registration access for people with disabilities by requiring that state programs providing services to persons with disabilities also provide voter registration assistance. Do you support continuing this requirement and what other steps would you take to ensure that Texans with disabilities have the same access to voting (registering and casting a ballot) as Texans without disabilities?

**Yes, I support continuing this requirement. I support the Voter Empowerment Act of 2017, which would modernize voter registration, promote access to voting for individuals with disabilities, and protect the ability of individuals to exercise the right to vote in elections.**

6. **Transportation:** Accessible transportation in urban, suburban and rural America is essential for people with disabilities to participate in community activities and to obtain medical care. What actions would you take to increase accessible transportation options for people with disabilities in urban, suburban and rural America?

**I voted against H.R. 620 when it came to the House floor earlier this year because I oppose efforts to undermine the ADA. One key provision of the ADA requires public and private transportation to meet ADA requirements.**

**In many parts of Texas, paratransit and taxi vouchers are the only forms of transportation for people with disabilities. For that reason, it is important that we find additional ways of expanding transportation options for people with disabilities**



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in these communities. Federal grant programs can be used to address the public transportation needs of underserved rural communities, including persons with disabilities. In addition, the US Dept. of Transportation has several studies underway to explore innovative transportation efforts. We can learn from these studies as well as from pilot programs in other states as we work to meet the transportation needs of Texans with disabilities.

7. **Emergency Preparedness:** What can the federal government do to improve emergency management and preparedness for people with disabilities?

I voted against H.R. 620 when it came to the House floor earlier this year because I oppose efforts to undermine the ADA. One critical provision of the ADA requires local emergency preparedness and response programs to be accessible to people with disabilities.

It is critical to have an emergency response that accounts for the needs of people with disabilities, such as accessible temporary housing and transportation and continuous nursing care. Experienced organizations such as Portlight Inclusive Disaster Strategies and the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies offer technical assistance, training, and guidance on accessible communications, services, and supports for persons with disabilities in the event of emergencies and disasters. As a Senator, I would explore how the inclusion of these guidelines could improve both federal emergency management planning, response, and recovery, and the enforcement of federal guidelines in local and state-level emergency planning and response.

8. **Special Education:** A recent investigation by the U.S. Department of Education found that Texas implemented a limit on the number of Texas students receiving special education services, which lead to tens of thousands of children with disabilities not receiving the services for which they were eligible. As a result, school districts must now work to identify eligible students and provide them the special education services for which they are entitled. Do you support or oppose increased education funding to ensure that Texas public schools have the resources and training necessary to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities?

I support increased education funding for students with disabilities, and was disappointed to learn that Texas had capped special education services, which led to children with



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**disabilities being denied the services they need to learn. I recently supported appropriations that would increase funding for the IDEA Act, and am a cosponsor of a bill that seeks to fully fund the Act. The protection and full funding of the IDEA Act is vital to ensuring that students with disabilities can access public education.**

9. **ADA:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects people with disabilities of all ages from discrimination in employment, public accommodations and other areas. The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed a bill to reform the ADA. Do you support or oppose maintaining the original protections of the ADA?

**I voted against H.R. 620 when it came to the House floor earlier this year because I oppose efforts to undermine the ADA.**

10. **Disability Integration Act:** The Disability Integration Act (DIA) is bi-partisan legislation introduced in the U.S. House and Senate that will guarantee people with disabilities the liberty and freedoms outlined in the Constitution. This will mean access to community-based long-term services and supports; health care; and affordable, accessible, integrated housing. If elected, would you become a sponsor of the DIA?

**As a member of the House of Representatives, I am a co-sponsor of the Disability Integration Act. In the Senate, I would continue to support the identical bill.**

11. **Wages:** Under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, employers can obtain certificates from the Department of Labor (DOL) to pay less than minimum wage to workers with disabilities. Most of these jobs are in sheltered workshops away from the community. In 2001, a U.S. General Accountability Office report found that the DOL had not managed the 14(c) program to ensure workers received the correct wages. A 2016 study by Disability Rights Texas found that such sheltered workplaces create an environment in which Texans with disabilities can be exploited and do not provide meaningful opportunities for skill advancement. What changes, if any, do you believe the federal government should make to the 14(c) program? Would you support or oppose legislation that would eliminate the 14(c) program?

**I am a co-sponsor of the Transitioning to Integrated and Meaningful Employment Act of 2017, which would phase out a law that allows employers to pay people with disabilities a**



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**subminimum wage. To complement this bill, I believe we should also explore ways to incentivize employers to hire individuals with disabilities.**

12. **Empower Care Act:** The Money Follows the Person (MFP) program began in Texas and has relocated over 30,000 Texans out of costly nursing homes and other institutions to less expensive, more inclusive and better-liked community settings. Although federal MFP has expired, SB 2227 (the Empower Care Act) is a bi-partisan bill reauthorizing it. Would you support or oppose the Empower Care Act?

**I am a co-sponsor of the EMPOWER Care Act in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, I would continue to support the identical bill.**

13. **Community Attendants:** Community Attendants provide critical in-home community support services to people with disabilities and older Americans that allow them to stay in their own homes and communities. In Texas, most community attendants receive less than \$10 per hour, and do not receive sick leave, vacation or health benefits. Would you support policies and funding that would increase the number of community attendants that are available to provide these critical in-home community services and supports?

**I support policies and funding to increase the number of community attendants, such as raising the minimum wage to \$15, ensuring paid family, medical, and sick leave, and guaranteeing healthcare coverage for all.**

14. **Census:** Census data is widely used to apportion federal resources for community programs. So far three Census test studies have been canceled due to a lack of funding. What measures would you support to ensure that the Census is conducted in a comprehensive and apolitical manner with sufficient funding to guarantee the most accurate count possible of the population of individuals with disabilities?

**I want to make sure the Census has sufficient funds to do its job. I also support the 2020 Census Idea Act, which seeks to ensure accuracy in the census count. Relatedly, I oppose the addition of a Census question on citizenship because it is specifically intended to undercount large immigrant populations.**

15. **Community-Based Services:** Do you support continuing the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Settings (HCBS) rule that was established in 2014? How will you work



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to ensure that individuals receiving Medicaid community-based services have full access to the broader community and are able to access care in the most integrated setting?

**I support the current timeline and enforcement of the Home and Community-Based Settings Final Rule issued by CMS and will continue to advocate that this rule remains intact so that individuals have access to services that support full integration and self-determination.**

16. **Social Security:** Social Security insures nearly all Americans and provides benefits to over 12 million people with disabilities and their spouses and children. People with disabilities and their families access benefits under all parts of the Social Security system, and all parts of the system are important to people with disabilities. Do you support or oppose cuts to, or changes in, eligibility for Social Security? What action, if any, would you take to strengthen parts of Social Security to meet the needs to people with disabilities?

**I oppose any changes to these critical programs that will harm recipients. We must also make it easier for people with disabilities to work and remain benefit eligible. We should create more incentives to work while on Social Security, while ensuring that individuals with disabilities have information on the federal work incentives available.**

17. **Medicaid:** Do you support or oppose turning Medicaid into a system of “block grants” or imposing “per capita caps?” If you support this, how would you implement such a program? If you are opposed, are there improvements you would support?

**I oppose turning Medicaid into a system of block grants or per capita caps. I believe that it is critical that Texas expands Medicaid, and have cosponsored a bill that would provide Texas with the same federal incentives to expand Medicaid now that were provided to states a few years ago.**

18. **Cannabis:** The U.S. Department of Justice has been directed to no longer take a hands-off approach to enforcing federal cannabis laws in Texas and other states where any type of cannabis has been legalized. Would you support or oppose change at the federal level to protect medical cannabis patients and providers? Do you support or oppose federal prohibitions on cannabis research?



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**I support changes at the federal level to protect medical cannabis patients and providers and I also oppose federal prohibitions on cannabis research. I believe that we should ultimately end the federal prohibition of marijuana.**

19. **Engagement:** A key slogan of the disability community is “nothing about us without us.” Beyond what we now do, what can the disability community do to engage decision makers more effectively and participate in the policy decisions that affect our lives?

**We strive to make our campaign accessible to persons with disabilities and will continue to lift up the voices of persons with disabilities in office. Whenever possible, while traveling to town halls all over Texas, we attempt to create events that are accessible for wheelchair users and use PA systems to accommodate individuals who are hard-of-hearing. Furthermore, event announcements encourage contact with staff so that our campaign can provide any additional accommodations for attendees with disabilities upon request. We encourage persons with disabilities to continue to engage with the Beto for Texas campaign.**

