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Respondent

4 Anonymous

01:22

Time to complete

1. Your name *

Rob Saka

2. Position you are running for *

Seattle City Council District 1

3. Your zip code *

98106

4. Do you have direct experience with disability? *

 Yes No

5. If yes, please explain

6. How do you define inclusion? *

I believe inclusion is at the core of building a vibrant and equitable city for all residents. To me, inclusion means creating an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and has equal opportunities to thrive, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.

7. **FAMILIES:** How would you expand access to child care for children with disabilities?

Context: Quality, reliable child care is good for kids and families. But parents of children with disabilities are three times more likely to experience job disruptions because of problems with child care.

I believe in promoting inclusivity and providing equal opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities. Expanding access to child care for children with disabilities is a crucial aspect of creating a more inclusive and supportive community. We need to collaborate with child care providers, provide financial assistance, create specialized child care programs, collaborate with disability advocacy organizations, and create parent support networks. Expanding access to child care for children with disabilities is not only beneficial for families but also contributes to the overall well-being and inclusivity of our community.

I have a record of fighting for people with family caregiving obligations. I am the chief architect of a 2020 Amendment to the King County Charter to protect workers in the county who have family caregiving responsibilities. I worked closely with impacted communities, including SEIU 775, to champion and pass that voter-approved Amendment.

8. HOUSING - How would you help individuals and families with disabilities find and stay housed?

CONTEXT: Most people people in King County's annual homeless count are disabled, but neither Seattle nor King County have specific strategies to address their unique housing challenges.

- People with disabilities face high under- and unemployment, leaving them chronically housing unstable
- Parents who reduce hours to care for disabled loved ones face a lifetime of reduced income
- Many people with significant developmental disabilities live on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) of just \$914 a month – making them too poor to afford even extremely low-income housing.
- Federal housing vouchers help, but the waiting list can be years long and people still struggle to find appropriate and accessible housing

I am deeply committed to addressing the housing challenges faced by individuals and families with disabilities. It is disheartening that Seattle and King County lack specific strategies to cater to their unique needs. I believe it is crucial to develop comprehensive and inclusive policies that prioritize housing stability for this vulnerable population. We should increase affordable and accessible housing options, address under employment, provide financial assistance and support accessing that assistance, expedite federal housing vouchers, and provide tenant support. Everyone deserves the opportunity to have a safe and accessible place to call home, and I am committed to working tirelessly to achieve this goal.

9. SHELTER: How would you ensure people with developmental disabilities have a safe place to sleep and stay?

CONTEXT: Homelessness services are often not accessible to people with disabilities.

- They can be too loud and chaotic for Autistic people; they may lack outlets for power chairs, or refrigeration for medication.
- Caregivers can be refused, especially if they are of a different gender; and trans and queer youth report discrimination.
- At the same time, people who live on the street can lose their belongings in sweeps and must contend with "hostile architecture" - that is, benches and alcoves designed to discourage sitting or sleeping.

I recognize the importance of providing a safe place to sleep and stay for individuals with developmental disabilities, and I am dedicated to implementing policies and initiatives to address this critical issue. First and foremost, I believe in promoting inclusivity and accessibility in our housing options. This includes working closely with developers, nonprofit organizations, and housing advocates to prioritize the creation of affordable and accessible housing units specifically designed to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. Additionally, I am committed to expanding supportive housing options that cater to the unique needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. Lastly, I am dedicated to ensuring that our city's shelters and emergency housing facilities are equipped to support individuals with developmental disabilities. By working together and prioritizing the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, we can create a city where everyone has a safe place to sleep and stay.

10. SUPPORTIVE HOUSING: How would you ensure people significantly impacted by their developmental disabilities are receiving case management and the support needed to escape homelessness?

CONTEXT: People with developmental disabilities often lack access supportive housing options, which show the best results in reducing chronic homelessness.

- Supportive housing for adults is available to clients of the state's Aging and Long-Term Services Administration, but NOT the state Developmental Disabilities Administration.
- Adult family homes may be available, but most cater to aging residents. They also don't accommodate families.
- While there are community residential services through DDA that help individuals live independently, slots are capped and statewide only about 4,500 people are served.

Ensuring individuals significantly impacted by developmental disabilities receive the necessary case management and support to escape homelessness is a critical priority for our community. It is essential to approach this issue with compassion, inclusivity, and a commitment to equity. We need a comprehensive assessment of where we are, case management that centers every individual, accessible housing, and better training for case managers. I am committed to addressing this issue with empathy, expertise, and a determination to create a more inclusive and compassionate Seattle.

11. JUSTICE: Would you support cross-training among professionals in the courtroom, police departments, victim assistance agencies and schools to prepare the justice community for situations involving people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities so they can receive equal justice?

CONTEXT: People with disabilities face fear, prejudice, and a lack of understanding when they become entangled in the criminal justice system.

- Research estimates 30 to 50 percent of people killed by law enforcement in the U.S. are disabled, and people with developmental disabilities are over-represented in juvenile facilities, jails and prisons.
- Nationally, youth of various disabilities make up 65 percent to 70 percent of people involved in the juvenile justice system.
- At the same time, people intellectual disabilities have a 4 to 10 times higher risk of becoming victims.

- Yes
- No

12. **JOBS:** What would you do to increase job prospects for people with developmental disabilities?

CONTEXT: Developmental disability isn't tracked in employment rates, but most people with developmental disabilities would qualify as having a cognitive, ambulatory, or independent living disability.

- Washington's employment rate for people with a cognitive disability is 31 percent;
- For an ambulatory disability it is 30 percent
- For an independent living disability it is just 21 percent.
- The employment rate for non-disabled people in Washington is 80 percent.

Enhancing job prospects for this population requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on inclusivity, accessibility, and supportive policies. We should promote inclusive hiring, partner with vocational training programs, expand job coaching, and promote public awareness.

13. **MOBILITY:** How will you ensure our streets, sidewalks and intersections are safe and accessible to everyone?

CONTEXT: People who use wheelchairs or ambulatory devices struggle to move around safely.

- Sidewalk construction and maintenance and funding for curb ramps and accessible pedestrian signals is limited.
- Bike shares take up sidewalk space
- Autos often block intersections.

I believe that every resident, regardless of their age, ability, or mode of transportation, should have the right to move through our city safely and comfortably. We have to prioritize pedestrian safety, enhance accessibility, promote active transportation, as well as allocate adequate resources to accomplish these goals. Together, we can create a city that is inclusive, sustainable, and vibrant.

14. Do you have other ideas on ways to make our community more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities?

We need to improve our infrastructure, enhance public services, foster employment opportunities, promote accessible housing, expand accessibility in activities all across the city, and increase public awareness of these issues. Together, we can ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to thrive and participate fully in our community.