

Senator Kaine

1. Do you believe there are aspects of the Michigan charter schools experience that have been problematic and that require corrective action? What, if any, problems do you identify? What corrective policies and practices have you proposed in Michigan? Do problems you identify with the Michigan charter experience suggest to you any need for changes to federal charter policies to try to avoid such problems in other states with charter schools?

ANSWER: Each legislative effort to expand school choice in Michigan has come with additional oversight expectations for these schools, including the “Race to the Top” bills passed in 2009, the charter cap increase bill in 2011, and the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) reform legislation passed in 2016.

In the DPS bill, the legislature eliminated the ability of failing schools to shop for a new authorizer, and it now requires any authorizer wanting to sponsor a school in Detroit to be nationally accredited. Thank you for the opportunity to correct the record, Detroit schools - traditional public and public charter schools - now have *more* accountability than before.

2. Do you think that charter schools have done a good enough job fulfilling their original promise to share best practices with traditional public schools?

ANSWER: There is certainly room for improvement in the area of cooperation between traditional district and charter public schools. This is one of the goals of the charter school movement and I support an increase in the sharing of best practices between all successful schools.

3. Nearly 90 percent of virtual schools fail to graduate one-third or more of their students. Some virtual high schools are specifically intended to serve as alternative schools for high risk students, but their outcomes are equally dismaying. In fact, one-third or more students fail to graduate in 92 percent of the alternative virtual high schools in your home state of Michigan. What role have you played in supporting or reforming virtual schools? How can you explain their dismal outcomes for students, and particularly the most at-risk students? What controls do you believe need to be in place so these schools do not proliferate as “dumping grounds” for vulnerable students across the country?

ANSWER: I believe that states have the obligation to set accountability standards and if schools consistently fall below those standards, they should be closed regardless of their governance or form. Bad schools that fail our children must be closed. I will certainly support states in their efforts to hold schools accountable and will provide technical assistance, training, or other support as appropriate.

4. What proactive steps would you take to ensure girls of color are not subject to disparate school discipline policies, including disproportionately high rates of suspensions and expulsions?

ANSWER: Discipline policies need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective and implemented fairly; and if confirmed, I look forward to working with state and local officials should they seek assistance.

In general I believe it is best to defer to the judgment of state and local officials about how best to implement education policies. I do not think the nation's governors want me to come to their states and tell them what to do. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to share data and good research from the Department of Education with state and local officials looking to improve educational opportunities. I will travel the country sharing best practices and encourage others to look to and adapt solutions that have worked.

5. The school to prison pipeline has been well documented, with reports from the Department demonstrating the relationship between harsh and disparate school discipline policies and future criminal justice system involvement. The most profound disparities in this pipeline affect African Americans. Would this issue be a priority for you? What are your plans to address these systemic challenges?

ANSWER: I believe good education is the foundation to being a good citizen. A good school can provide a lifeline to a struggling student and help prevent them from slipping through the cracks and into our justice system. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with you and others in Congress to better understand what an appropriate federal role could be to help our state and local leaders address this important issue.

6. You have been outspoken since your nomination about the importance of local control to ensure that local policy makers can create an agenda that best suits their specific needs. And yet, let's consider the practicality of the President Elect's privatization proposal. Many states don't have private school programs at all and many more have extremely small programs. Also, only 32.4% of children have access to a charter school option. Wouldn't the President Elect's voucher plan trample on their local control of education in those communities by forcing funds into private schools even if it goes against the community's wishes?

ANSWER: Not at all. What is more local and individualized than a parent's decision? Every child should be given the opportunity to succeed and parents should feel empowered to make choices that best fit their child. If there is a mismatch between the school and their child, parents need to have access to multiple opportunities – and be able to pick an educational setting that best meet the needs of their child. And they need the best information possible upon which to make those decisions. But those specific choices should not be mandated by the federal government. If confirmed, I do look forward to working with Congress to develop President Trump's proposal that would provide the opportunity for choices to be offered.

7. As Secretary, would you support bankrupting local districts and leaving them to private, free market forces rather than intervening or otherwise working to rebuild the public system in a more effective way?

ANSWER: No.

8. Numerous federal agencies have found that student loan servicers contracted by the federal government are causing borrowers massive headaches. An astounding eight million borrowers are in default. Do you believe we should hold our federal contractors to higher standards?

ANSWER: If confirmed, I will strive to do a better job than the previous administration at managing all of the Department's contractors and will ensure they follow all the appropriate consumer protection laws as those laws were written.

9. Recent data demonstrates Hispanic/Latino and African American graduation rates (75.2 percent and 70.7 percent, respectively) are still lower than rates for White (86.6 percent) and Asian (88.7) students. How would the U.S. Department of Education under your leadership prioritize policy guidance, technical assistance, and funding to improve graduation rates for students of color?

ANSWER: I do agree that the graduation gaps in our country are unacceptable, which is why I have made it my life's work in Michigan and around the country to improve educational opportunities for our most vulnerable students.

I look forward to working with this committee to continue those efforts. In general I believe it is best to defer to the judgment of state and local officials about how best to implement education policies. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to share data and good research from the Department of Education with state and local officials looking to improve educational opportunities. I will travel around the country sharing best practices hoping to encourage others to look to solutions that have worked and 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.

10. The Department released guidance for colleges to urge them to remove questions about criminal histories on admissions applications. These questions impose bias, and studies have shown that these biases can serve as a barrier to postsecondary access which has implications for low-income and minority communities, despite there being no evidence that screening for criminal history threatens campus safety. If confirmed, do you intend to maintain this guidance, or support similar new guidance?

ANSWER: If confirmed, I will review the referenced guidance. There is a very careful balance colleges and universities must strike between the different steps they may choose to take to ensure campus safety (e.g. criminal history questions on admission applications) in their particular locality, versus not unduly discouraging otherwise-qualified applicants.

11. What are you going to do lessen the total debt load students are taking on, and in particular, help the estimated 8 million Americans who are in default on their federal student loans?

ANSWER: I think we can all agree that the growing amount of student debt in America is a serious challenge. I think the solutions to this challenge must be multi-faceted. One of the best ways to tackle the student debt issue is ensure students are able to actually be hired after they complete their postsecondary program. President Trump has spoken extensively about his plans to put Americans back to work and boost the nation's stagnant economy.

Beyond that, we need to embrace new pathways of learning, such as competency-based education. The old and expensive brick-mortar-and-ivy model is not the only one that will lead to a prosperous future.

We need to support all postsecondary avenues, including programs offering credentials. There are many great jobs available that do not require a traditional four-year degree. We also need to support students and families so they are able to make informed choices about what type of education they want to pursue.

In this vein, I am interested in making sure students have good information about the costs of college and the labor market outcomes of particular fields so they can make good decisions at the beginning of their educational pursuits about what program may work best for them and their situation.

Finally, we need to simplify and streamline the repayment options offered to borrowers to help them better understand their options. President Trump has proposed to streamline the income-driven repayment plans into one plan that will cap a borrower's monthly payment at 12.5 percent of his or her discretionary income, and ensure a borrower has relief from his or her loan after 15 years of payment.

If confirmed, I look forward to working on all of these issues as the Committee begins the process of reauthorizing the Higher Education Act.

12. The Pell Grant program is currently slated to have a significant surplus for the next several years. In 2011, Congress eliminated the year-round Pell Grant, cutting off access to an additional grant disbursement for thousands of students. In 2012, Congress made additional eligibility changes to the program by eliminating eligibility for 'Ability-to-Benefit' students, reducing the income threshold to qualify for zero Expected Family Contribution, eliminating eligibility for students receiving ten percent of the maximum award, and reducing the number of semesters students are eligible to receive a Pell Grant. Because of these changes hundreds of thousands of students have seen their Pell Grant award reduced or lost eligibility all together. The current surplus exists in part due to the eligibility changes made to the program. Do you support retaining the funding that was generated from cuts to student aid to reinvest in the Pell Grant program?

ANSWER: If confirmed, I look forward to working with members of Congress from both parties in both chambers to appropriately fund the Department's programs, especially the Pell Grant program. In doing so, I will look closely at the budget of the Department

of Education to determine the best allocation of taxpayer dollars to programs when making a proposed budget for future fiscal years.

13. As you know, there are at least 15 million students living in poverty in this country. The majority of these students attend 60,000 public schools with funds designated for schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. Known in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as Title I, this funding stream is dedicated to educating low-income students in schools with additional funds to serve their students. It also provides mechanisms to ensure that Title I funds are actually spent on these students. Will you commit that President-elect's \$20 billion school choice proposal would not take from ESSA Title I?

ANSWER: President Trump has made a robust parental choice proposal a centerpiece of his education platform, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you on our proposal and hope that you will keep an open mind this voluntary program that will simply allow interested families to choose the school setting that best meets the unique needs of their individual child.

14. The Department of Education collects extensive data on public schools including achievement, enrollment, discipline, bullying and harassment, and special education information. These data collection procedures provide transparency to stakeholders and allow for the Department and state educational agencies to intervene if necessary to reduce and prevent discriminatory practices. In fact, in Virginia our Governor analyzed the Department of Education's data and found that there were a disproportionate number of student discipline referrals for students with disabilities. You're a proponent of vouchers to private schools. As you know, private schools are not required to report the same information, including many private schools receiving federal taxpayer dollars in states with voucher programs. However, if your Department of Education does not collect any of this information on private schools, how will you ensure schools are not discriminating against students based on their race, gender, religion, or disability?

ANSWER: Transparency of necessary information is important to ensuring accountability to parents, and I support ensuring parents receive necessary information so that they can make informed decisions about the school their child would attend. As you may know, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program prohibits, by law, discrimination against "program participants or applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or sex." I would imagine that any new voucher proposal approved by Congress would maintain this common-sense requirement, and I look forward to working with you on President Trump's proposal when his administration releases such a proposal.

15. I am a strong believer in the power of our community colleges, which do an incredible amount of the workforce training in this country. In fact, many people don't know that the Pell Grant is really the largest source of support for workforce training, and about 1 in 4 community college students receive Pell Grants. Last year, students in my state of Virginia who received training at a community college earned more than 15,000 industry certifications and professional licensures. And as Governor I prioritized investing in our two-year colleges.

Many of these programs at our community colleges are largely focused on career and technical education, which is in demand by many employers around the country. This committee will consider reauthorization of the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. How would you support the development of high-quality CTE programs at our community colleges? And how do you make sure that all students can afford them—especially when they might need expensive equipment or supplies?

16. What are your top three priorities for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act reauthorization? What policy changes would you advocate for in the upcoming reauthorization of the Act?

ANSWER, to 15 & 16: 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 and 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 that help 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.

17. The quality of career and technical education (CTE) programs largely relies on the quality of CTE teachers. CTE teachers have a dual challenge—they must be excellent teachers as well as up-to-date on their industry knowledge, which can be particularly challenging for some in-demand, quickly changing sectors. States and districts often struggle with finding high quality CTE teachers, many of whom can earn a higher salary in the private sector, especially in rural areas. If you are confirmed as U.S. Secretary of Education, what will you do to increase the supply of highly effective CTE teachers in the United States?

ANSWER: As it relates to career and technical education (CTE) teachers, if confirmed, I look forward to exploring with this committee ways to improve CTE through the reauthorization of the Perkins CTE Act. In general I believe it is best to defer to the judgment of state and local officials about how best to implement education policies.

If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to share data and good research from the Department of Education with state and local officials looking to improve educational opportunities. I also hope that states and local leaders will think outside the box and innovate, looking for new solutions to vexing educational problems.

18. Do you believe school districts should be held accountable for identifying children of active duty service members and tracking their student achievement results? Why or why not?

ANSWER: The Every Student Succeeds Act requires states and school districts to report student achievement data on the children of active duty service members and I am

committed to implementing the law.

19. A large number of students in our country have more interactions with school resource officers than with school counselors or other specialized instructional support personnel. In what ways will you work to invest in programs that provide students with access to mental health, counseling and other related services to improve student safety and health?

ANSWER: Early intervention to address the underlying issues students are facing is critical to preventing students from becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

In addition to working with my colleague at the Department of Justice to promote the importance of education for students caught in the juvenile justice system, if confirmed, I will work with states to help promote the sharing of best practices to help these students and to implement the law as envisioned by Congress. Under the State Academic Education Grants, districts will be able to capitalize on the flexibility in the law to fund important programs they believe will help address some of the issues to help students succeed.

20. One of the hallmarks of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), of which adult education is a core component, is better alignment and coordination at the federal, state, and local levels across a number of workforce and skill development programs. The Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services have been at the center of a dynamic, innovative and impactful working group of agencies to improve access to and accountability of these programs. Will you commit to supporting these efforts and advancing the work of these agencies to ensure the success of programs under WIOA?

ANSWER: The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act was reauthorized in 2014 as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The reforms enacted in that legislation 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.

21. Students and families face steep costs for postsecondary education while having limited information about the return on investment. What opportunities do you see for the Department of Education to provide the public with better information on expected postsecondary outcomes, including job placement and earnings?

ANSWER: I do believe greater transparency for students and parents is important. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to address this issue as part of Higher Education Act reauthorization.

22. FIRE, and other organizations opposing the rights of campus rape victims, have argued that victims should not be able to report to the school and should instead only be able to report to law enforcement. This position is universally opposed by victims' advocates, who believe

victims should be able to choose whether to report to law enforcement, to their school, or to both. Given that very few survivors come forward to report sexual assault to law enforcement, victims' groups believe that limiting a survivor's reporting options will lead to many survivors not coming forward to anyone at all. Even when victims do report to law enforcement, they rarely see justice – only 14 – 18% of assaults reported to police result in conviction. Could you speak about your position on denying a survivor the ability to report to their schools?

ANSWER: Every student has a right to have a learning environment that is safe to learn, grow and thrive. I am very sensitive to issues involving violence in our schools, including sexual violence.

Students have a right to feel safe and protected in their learning environment. Sexual violence is particularly disturbing as its victims often are reluctant to pursue action by the criminal justice system. Protecting the victim's right to privacy and right to decide how and whether to pursue all the legal avenues afforded him/her must be respected.

Sexual violence can impact a student in profound ways, destroying trust and potentially re-victimizing the victim as the most private of relationships is on display for judgment, ridicule and challenge. Innocent victims and survivors of sexual violence who want to continue their education deserve our strong, and unrelenting support. Perpetrators of this violence are also entitled to certain protections, including the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. In a non-criminal context, many schools have a zero-tolerance policy for violence as well as honor codes that set these expectations for the entire student body.

It is expected that schools will have in place mechanisms to respond to allegations of violence, and processes to fully investigate and respond to allegations of criminal activity, including sexual violence, on their campuses. Those procedures must be fair, accessible, and consistent.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure robust enforcement of laws that protect students from violence and commit to working with the leadership at the Department to examine mechanisms that improve public access to information and empower students, parents, and others to make decisions about which environments are the most appropriate.

23. Title IX requires that every recipient of federal education funds must designate at least one employee who is responsible for coordinating the school's compliance. This person is sometimes referred to as the Title IX coordinator. Coordinators oversee all complaints of sex discrimination. They also identify and address any patterns or systemic problems at their schools. Instead of giving these coordinators the support, guidance, and training they need to do their work, we've seen time and time again that many schools are without a Title IX coordinator. It is also unfortunately quite common to find coordinators who do not understand the scope of the law. What efforts will you undertake to ensure that all Title IX coordinators have the resources available to do their job – including access to funding for training and professional development?

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 making a proposed budget for future fiscal years.

24. An important component of ESSA is robust stakeholder engagement, from planning to implementation. What will you do as Secretary to ensure that states engage in substantive stakeholder engagement under ESSA both in their planning over the next several months and during implementation starting next school year?

ANSWER: If confirmed, I will implement the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act as intended. Stakeholder engagement is an important part of the law and a provision to ensure parents, local officials, and other important community leaders are consulted as the states and school districts develop their plans.

As a part of the job in monitoring states for the implementation of the new law, I will expect full compliance with all of the consultation requirements under the law.

25. Your predecessors in the Department of Education made it clear that they believed the United States should lead the world in access to high-quality early childhood education. Do you share this belief and would you make this a goal for our country?

ANSWER: Early childhood education is important and can help put a child on a path to success and the workforce. That is why it is exciting to see so many states invest in and support early education programs for families.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with state and local leaders to support their efforts to provide early childhood education. As you know, the Every Student Succeeds Act included the authorization of Preschool Development Grants to help states improve the services they are providing. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to confirm the efficiency and effectiveness of all early childhood education programs and initiatives.

26. TRIO and GEAR UP programs help prepare many minority and first generation students for college. What is the administration's position on increasing access/funding for these programs?

ANSWER: I think high quality college access programs provide a vital service to helping students achieve their dream of a postsecondary education. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the results of these programs and putting forward a budget request that supports high quality, effective programs.

27. Can you provide some insight on how this administration will work with HBCUs? How will you strengthen our HBCUs?

ANSWER: I believe Historically Black Colleges and Universities are an important piece of America's higher education system. If confirmed, I look forward to working with these

institutions to ensure they are well-positioned to continue to serve students in the most effective way.

28. Data from the latest arts education data study undertaken by the National Center for Education Statistics shows that students in high poverty elementary and high schools were less likely to have access to a well-rounded education, including music and arts, than their more affluent counterparts. What role would you play as Secretary of Education in supporting equal access to a well-rounded education, including music and arts, for all children, including those who are in high poverty schools? And what role can music and arts education play in the lives of students identified with special needs, or students studying in a low-performing schools?

ANSWER: In general I believe it is best to defer to the judgment of state and local officials about how best to implement education policies. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to share data and good research from the Department of Education with state and local officials looking to improve educational opportunities.

I will travel around the country sharing best practices, encouraging others to look to solutions that have worked and 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.

As it relates to arts and music education, I strongly agree that they can be an important part of a well-rounded education and I hope that with the greater flexibility provided to States and local school districts that education leaders at the local level can find new ways to provide opportunities to students in the music and arts.

29. Recent experimental studies on statewide voucher programs in Indiana and Louisiana found that public school students receiving vouchers subsequently scored lower on state assessments than similar students remaining in public schools. Why do you think the proposal from the President Elect, which is supported by mixed research at best, is a responsible use of federal dollars? How are we to expect that a national experiment, that at best covers only a small portion of private school tuition, will have vastly better outcomes than so many of the voucher programs across the country?

ANSWER: The initiative proposed by the President during the campaign is a voluntary program to enable interested states to offer a range of educational options to low income families. I look forward to working with the President and Congress to support and improve public schools and increase high quality educational options, particularly for low income students. Several studies have found that students participating in choice programs have higher test scores, better graduation rates and higher parental satisfaction levels than their public school counterparts. In addition, a study about the FL choice program found generalized improvements across education sectors, including public schools. (Figlio and Hart Study of Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, 2014).