

#49

COMPLETE

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**Q1**

Name

Priya Sundareshan

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**Q2**

What race are you running in? (LD? House? Senate?)

LD18 Senate

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**Q3**

Email

priya4arizona@gmail.com

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**Q4**

Respondent skipped this question

Phone Number

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**Q5**

Children who have year-round health insurance do better in school, are more likely to graduate from high school, are healthier, and earn more in adulthood. There are approximately 161,000 uninsured children in Arizona. If elected, how would you help ensure that all children and families have access to the health care that they need?

We need to expand eligibility for health insurance so that all children can receive coverage, whether by raising the percentage of the Federal Poverty Limit so that more families are eligible for services, or by tying eligibility to inflation, or other methods. We should also reduce the administrative burden on families so that they do not need to take affirmative steps in order to receive the care they may be eligible for. I look to the Children's Action Alliance and other subject matter experts for information and recommendations on these topics.

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**Q6**

We know that a child's earliest years, birth to age 8, are the most important for the development of their brains. High-quality early childhood experiences can enhance that development. How can the state take a role in helping parents give their children the best start in life?

Increase the state funding for early childhood education out of the state general fund, rather than relying mainly on federal sources and the tobacco tax. Child care providers need support, especially after the pandemic, through direct financial assistance as well as by ensuring the safety of children and staff through public health regulations and mask recommendations (which unfortunately our state leaders have not supported). We should be providing adequate funding to support families in providing basic needs, which can reduce incidence of calls due to neglect and entrance of children into the foster care system, and therefore the need to fund the more punitive agencies through protective services and the foster care system.

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**Q7**

Many families in Arizona are struggling. Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable, nearly one in four children live in poverty, and resources that used to be available to help families are no longer there. Research shows that when access to safety net resources are low, foster care populations are high. What is your plan to help children and families get the resources and services they need to keep them out of the child welfare system?

Most children are entering the foster care system due to charges of neglect, rather than abuse. This means that providing support for their families could reduce the chances these children would end up in the child welfare system at all. Lack of affordable housing is certainly one way that families might not be able to adequately support their children, so I would promote policies that can assist families with housing needs or other direct cash assistance so they can make their budgets balance. Raising the eligibility limits so that more families can qualify for assistance, and making application for these services much simpler, would also help support these families.

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**Q8**

Arizona has been among the bottom states in per pupil K-12 funding for the past decade which has resulted in severe challenges including teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, and insufficient student support services. How will you ensure that students in every neighborhood have access to quality, well-funded education in Arizona

We must apply as much of our state budget surplus to education as possible, including increasing teacher pay and providing debt forgiveness, hiring more teachers and staff to reduce teacher-student ratios and provide other support for counseling, mental health, and the arts (often the first programs cut). We should also try to permanently remove the AEL by referring it to the ballot, but in the meantime the legislature must consistently bypass the limit. The school funding formula should provide more resources to students in poverty, as CAA recommends. We should look at other school services that support our families with minimal application processes, such as universal school meals. I will fight for these issues and work with other legislators to find common ground to make these a reality.

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**Q9**

Arizona's elected leaders have created a tax code that is upside down and regressive— meaning that those with low incomes pay a much higher share of their income in taxes compared to Arizona's highest income earners. If elected, what will you do to make sure that wealthy and corporations pay their share of taxes?

I will work to prevent further tax cuts that favor the wealthy and corporations, especially because tax cuts require a legislative supermajority to reverse. We should instead attempt to find enough legislators to reverse those tax cuts so that low-income Arizonans aren't shouldering the relative tax burden. We should instead look at lowering the regressive aspects of the tax code, perhaps by reducing the sales tax which falls on the least wealthy.

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**Q10**

As the cost of living is rising faster than wages in Arizona, many households are struggling to afford basic needs. If elected, what are three ways that you will improve economic well-being for Arizonans?

1 - providing universal school meals is a great way to reduce the time and cost burden of preparing and providing meals for families of school children, and ensures that children receive the nutrition they need without stigma from their peers. 2 - Requiring employers to offer, and supporting them if needed, paid family and medical leave to workers allows people to take care of their own health or that of their loved ones at critical times in their lives to improve their well-being, and should encourage worker productivity and retention. 3 - Expanding access to health insurance by increasing eligibility limits and reducing paperwork or application procedures to allow more families to access the support they need.

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