

#49

COMPLETE

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**Q1**

Name

Lorena Austin

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**Q2**

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

LD 9 House of Rep.

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**Q3**

Email

austinfoz@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?

One of my core values is equitable healthcare. The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) is one of the best-run Medicaid programs in the nation. It is imperative that we build on that success by allowing every Arizonan to affordably buy into the program. In addition, the United States continues to be the only developed country that does not guarantee paid family leave to workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us this policy is one of the most impactful ways to support our working families.

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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?

It is imperative that we recognize the importance of paid family leave, especially when considering the impact it has for a child to have parents/ guardians present. Advocating on behalf of this will push legislation forward that prioritizes child well-being, and all aspects of their lives, whether it is assuring funds are distributed fairly and equitably for quality education or means and access to sufficient health care.

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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?

Two of my core issues that need to be addressed in Arizona are the rising housing costs/ cost of living and lack of sufficient, reliable community resources- without them, we face situations like higher foster care populations. The current rising housing costs have left many residents of Mesa in limbo. Residents who once saw a future of owning a house now face the real possibility of relocation. We must work with the state to reinstate community housing, allowing cities to work with local stakeholders to create equitable living opportunities for all residents. Even more, for many families, public investments into the community pave the way for people to thrive. This type of programming provides a way to empower families and individuals to attain self-sufficiency with the right to live with dignity and in turn, avoid the welfare system.

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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

Education must be a priority for Arizona. We can no longer afford to be ranked #49 in education funding per pupil. Currently, Arizona ranks #50 in teacher pay. Our P-20 education deserves quality educators who are supported by their state. Arizona's children deserve quality education regardless of the district or community they are a part of. This includes an increase in state funding and better distribution of these funds, as well as understanding and mitigating systemic issues that further marginalize certain communities.

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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?

With rising inflation and increased cost of living, it is very likely that our country will face some hard times in the near future, and therefore the accountability to tax fairly and justly needs to become the standard tax code. Right now, the tax cuts put in place only benefit the richest and reduce the state revenue- measures need to be passed to implement major oversight in this area.

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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?

First, ensure that there always remains access to community resources and stays an integral priority for public investments, as many of these same community establishments are what helped me pull myself out of poverty and eventually get a degree. It's also imperative that we start demanding and advocating for higher wages- when gas prices are slowly starting to look like the minimum wage in many states, it's time to reevaluate the standard to how we compensate workers. Lastly, in order to stimulate the economy and economic well being of Arizonans, I will work diligently with community members from all backgrounds to find solutions that work for everyone, whether they are teachers or small business owners.

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