**DISABILITY CANDIDATES FORUM: ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL’S RACE**

**WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES**

The nine questions in this document were selected by a committee formed from members of the supporting organizations for the February 9, 2018 non-partisan Disability Candidates Forum: Illinois Attorney General’s Race. All candidates listed by the Illinois Board of Elections as competing in the primary for March 20, 2018, were invited. Those candidates who participated in the forum in person were also invited to submit responses to these written questions. Thank you to candidates Fairley, Mariotti, Quinn, Raoul, Rotering and Ruiz for their responses. All are Democrats competing in the primary.

Responses from the candidates are organized in alphabetical order throughout this document. Responses were received and compiled by Access Living; for questions about this document, please contact Amber Smock at asmock@accessliving.org. For questions about candidates’ responses, please contact their campaign staff.

This document is for public information and dissemination, and does not constitute endorsement by any of the Forum’s supporting organizations.

Questions and answers begin as follows.

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 1: The Attorney General’s office has two important, and sometimes conflicting, roles: 1) representing State agencies that are sued; and 2) bringing proactive civil rights litigation. In the past, when defending State agencies, the AG’s office has raised defenses that have undercut the civil rights of people with disabilities, such as arguing that the ADA is unconstitutional. As Attorney General, what would you do to ensure that your office doesn’t take legal positions that will hurt people with disabilities?**

**Sharon Fairley**

People with disabilities are entitled, as a matter of law, to fair and equal opportunities in all aspects of life. The Disability Rights Bureau in the Attorney General’s Office enforces state and federal laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities to equal access to buildings, housing and services. The Bureau also works with the Health Care Bureau to mediate complaints about assistive technology equipment. In addition to the Bureau's enforcement work, the Disability Rights Bureau regularly provides technical assistance and referrals to individuals with disabilities and public and private entities.

I will be a strong advocate for persons with disabilities and will work to prevent the introduction of or minimize the impact of actions by Illinois agencies that could cause potential harm to persons with disabilities. I will continue to support resources for the Disability Rights Bureau in the office and provide training to attorneys in the office as well as state agencies on disability laws. I will maintain an open channel of communication with outside stakeholders and organizations committed to protecting the rights of persons with disabilities to ensure that their perspective is considered. I also will work to educate Illinois residents on disability and civil rights law so they can develop and advocate for political leaders with informed opinions.

**Aaron Goldstein**

Each of these conflicts must be resolved on a case by case basis. It is not my job to substitute my judgment for the Legislature. But I believe the Attorney General is first and foremost, the attorney for the people and if, after extensive research and analysis, I believe the Legislature is violating the rights of the people, I will fall on the side of the people.

There are also other roles at play. As an attorney I have an ethical obligation to make only meritorious claims and contentions. Illinois Rule of Professional Conduct 3.1 states: “A lawyer shall not bring or defend a proceeding, or assert or controvert an issue therein, unless there is a basis in law and fact for doing so that is not frivolous, which includes a good-faith argument for an extension, modification or reversal of existing law.” If a law is clearly in conflict with the Constitution I have an ethical duty not to defend it. I also have the important role of being an adviser to the Legislature. Not only to make recommendations for good policy but also to advise the Legislature as to what complies with the law and constitution and what does not.

In short, I would **never** make an argument or defend a law that is contrary to the rights of the people, including people with disabilities.

**Renato Mariotti**

I will refuse to permit my office to advance positions that run afoul of the law or our state or federal constitutions. To the extent that my office is asked to defend a policy that is not clearly unlawful but is irrational or destructive or would harm the people of Illinois, I would do whatever I could publicly and privately to try to change the State's position to the extent possible within my ethical boundaries as an attorney. I would speak out publicly against those policies unless doing so would violate my ethical duties as an attorney. To the extent I was able to do so, I would also let the public know about the harm caused by the position that my office was asked to take. I also will ensure that as little as possible is done to support irrational or destructive policies—my office will do the minimum required by law, and go not one inch further than that.

**Pat Quinn**

The Attorney General, as the lawyer for the people of Illinois, must always seek to vindicate the law. If on some occasions I conclude that my duty to provide representation to a state agency conflicts with my obligation to the people of the state, I will arrange for outside counsel to provide representation to that agency. If elected Attorney General, I will work diligently to ensure that the state complies with the statutes and consent decrees that protect the rights of people with disabilities.

I have worked throughout my career to further the public interest, and have long worked to better the lives of disabled people. In 2013, the Arc of the United States conferred upon me the Advocacy Matters! Award. This national award is presented annually to individuals who advocate and protect the civil and human rights of people with disabilities and increase resources, services and supports that promote their full inclusion and participation in the community.

**Kwame Raoul**

Even when representing state agencies, I would not attempt to weaken the ADA or pursue legal positions that would lead to harming the people of Illinois, especially those with disabilities.

The duty of the attorney general is to follow the law as it is written in statute and as it has been interpreted by courts, regardless of the office holder’s personal opinion. In representing State agencies that are being sued, these authorities – not loyalty to any administration – will be my guide as I carry out the responsibility to act in court on behalf of the State. But as an advocate for equal rights and civil protections for the citizens of our state, I will not hesitate to speak loudly for fairness and quality of life for all Illinoisans, including our residents with disabilities. When necessary I will also continue to work with the General Assembly and executive branch agencies for changes in law, regulation and policy when I believe that they are necessary.

**Nancy Rotering**

As Attorney General, I am committed to protecting the rights of people with disabilities, and I will

make all efforts to not take legal positions that will hurt people with disabilities. First, I will

establish a Disability Advisory Council; I take seriously the concept of “nothing about you, without you”, and I will implement it as a practice as Attorney General. I will work with this Advisory Council and, more importantly - listen to this Advisory Council before taking legal actions that impact people with disabilities. But further, I am committed to holding state agencies accountable. We need an Attorney General who can and will tell a state agency that its actions are not acceptable or at times, legal.

**Jesse Ruiz**

As Attorney General, I will work to ensure that disability rights are enforced to ensure that all Illinoisans, especially those with disabilities, can fully achieve their full potential so that we as a society can achieve ours. It is only by providing access and accommodations for those with disabilities, that our whole society will thrive. When I become Attorney General, I will continue to enforce the two state laws critical to securing disability rights, the Illinois Human Rights Act and the Environmental Barriers Act. The office will also play an important role in the enforcement of federal disability rights laws in order to impact system-wide policy. While the office is responsible for defending state agencies against discrimination claims, the oversight I will bring to that work will ensure that our defense against individual claims does not undercut the proactive work of the office.

[questions continued on next page]

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 2: People with disabilities often fall through the cracks when they become involved with the justice system as accused or convicted perpetrators. How will you work with community and advocacy groups to correct this?**

**Sharon Fairley**

People with disabilities have the right to justice and fair treatment in all areas of the criminal justice system, and must be afforded the support and accommodations required to make justice and fair treatment a reality. As attorney general, I will work with state and local law enforcement, outside advocacy groups, and the medical community to ensure that persons with disabilities have appropriate supports, accommodations, treatment, and education, as well as alternatives to sentencing and incarceration that include community-based corrections. In addition, I will work with state and local law enforcement and disability rights organizations to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to well-trained probation and parole officers who will treat them fairly based on their individual disability and their need for the supports and accommodations necessary to re-enter society, including those that will enable people to re-establish Medicaid Waiver services, SSI, housing, education, and job supports.

**Aaron Goldstein**

We must have true criminal justice reform. As someone who has worked in the criminal justice system on behalf of the accused I know very well how people with disabilities fall through the cracks. I will work with community and advocacy groups to educate the stakeholders in the system as well as the legislators so that we can correct these patterns. If the problem persists, I will seek legal action to protect those whose rights are being violated. I have worked very hard to eliminate cash bail from Cook County.

**Renato Mariotti**

As Attorney General, I will advocate for comprehensive criminal justice reform that focuses on incarcerating serious, violent offenders, appropriately sentencing non-violent offenders so we can reduce our prison population and prevent people from entering the system in the first place, and prioritizing rehabilitation, job training, mental health services, and reentry services. These reforms and reentry services also need to ensure that we treat people with basic human dignity while they are incarcerated or otherwise involved in the criminal justice system. People with disabilities deserve that same dignity and the opportunity to be productive members of society after their involvement with the criminal justice system. I will work closely with community and advocacy groups to understand how the system is falling short and specifically how we can improve the treatment of people with disabilities involved with the justice system.

**Pat Quinn**

The Attorney General must be a leader in improving the quality of justice in Illinois and reforming the criminal justice system. Mass incarceration, wrongful convictions, inadequate mental health and drug treatment, and unequal justice should be concerns of all Illinois citizens. If I am elected Attorney General, I will work closely with community and advocacy groups to address the particular issues and challenges faced by disabled people who are accused or convicted of crimes. I also will work with stakeholders to implement recommendations of the Protection of Individuals with Disabilities in the Criminal Justice Task Force that has been created by the General Assembly (and which includes the Attorney General).

We must ensure that disabled people receive adequate representation, that they receive the treatment they need and are not simply warehoused in prison, and that they are given the opportunity to receive training and other tools that will enable them to succeed following their release from prison. We must also ensure that law enforcement officers and other members of the criminal justice system receive the training they need to constructively interact with disabled people (see also my answer to question 3 below). People with disabilities must receive equal justice and must never be allowed to fall through the cracks.

**Kwame Raoul**

Work on criminal justice reform has been a constant of my career in the state Senate. I have sponsored and voted for numerous bills improving sentencing policy, diversion opportunities and prison conditions so offenders can access the services they need to avoid returning to the criminal justice system. Health care services are critical, especially for people with disabilities and those living with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders. As attorney general, I will use the office’s bully pulpit to continue advocating for additional funding for prison medical and mental health care, and I will work with my colleagues in the General Assembly on legislation that builds on my criminal justice reform achievements to make sure the rights of offenders are safeguarded and that they receive the help they need to thrive in the community once they are released. This type of assistance is particularly necessary for offenders with disabilities. I supported the elimination of bail for low-income offenders so that arrestees, especially those with medical needs and other challenges, are not left to languish in overcrowded and under-resourced jails while awaiting trial if they do not pose a flight risk or a threat to others. And I voted for a law that now requires prisons to offer to assist qualifying inmates in applying for Medicaid as their sentences come to an end, so they have seamless access to medical care when they walk outside the prison gates.

Landmark law enforcement reforms I sponsored in 2015 are also vital to ensuring that people with disabilities are treated fairly and appropriately by police when they are stopped or arrested. Incidents of excessive force used against individuals who had difficulty communicating with or understanding the orders of police shock the conscience. My law enforcement reforms included a requirement that police officers undergo training in the appropriate use of force, including training on interacting with persons with disabilities.

Body cameras are important tools for documenting what occurred in an encounter between a member of the public and police, especially in instances when the member of the public has a disability that affects his or her ability to communicate what happened. The 2015 law I sponsored included grants to help local law enforcement agencies purchase cameras and storage space for the footage, and as attorney general, I will ask the General Assembly for additional funding to help more agencies invest in this technology and to help departments maintain their body camera programs.

I intend to build on my criminal justice reform successes, continuing to work with the General Assembly on new legislation that makes sentencing more effective and prisons better at preparing offenders for life on the outside. Specifically, I will continue the current attorney general’s lawsuit to force a continuation of the consent decree process so that Chicago Police Department reforms continue with strong community input and are enforced in the future. The culture and practices of the CPD must change so that people with disabilities and mental illness, as well as people of color and others who often experience disparate treatment in police encounters, do not have to fear law enforcement. In this process, I will take care to bring advocates and organizations from the disability community into the conversation.

**Nancy Rotering**

First, we need to change the culture and treat people with respect in a broken system. Far too

often we treat people as numbers and not people. Add in discrimination and harassment by law

enforcement based on disability, and it’s no wonder that there is an ongoing and pervasive

problem in the criminal justice system. Further, I think it is important to emphasize that our goal

should be one of diversion. As Attorney General, I will help lead on and advocate for criminal

justice reform. Our current criminal justice system places far too much emphasis on punishment

and not enough emphasis on diversion and rehabilitation.

As Attorney General, I will also work to update protections, policies, and practices and stiffen

penalties for discrimination, profiling, and harassment. In addition, I will support safe housing and spaces for people with disabilities who are in the criminal justice system, and encourage re-entry plans recognizing their unique challenges.

As Attorney General, I will work at the state and local levels to make sure that law enforcement

personnel receive appropriate training to interact with people with disabilities. Law enforcement

should be required to develop programs at the community level to improve communications and

trust between police and the people they serve, revise police department recruitment programs to enhance diversity outreach and provide ongoing professional development programs, and require training for all state employees, including police and prison staff, which must include training in appropriate interactions with people with disabilities.

I will also work to make sure that there is strong and adequate oversight over the criminal justice

system so that we make sure that people with disabilities have their voices heard and appropriate advocates within the system, and that people with disabilities have all of the supports that they need.

**Jesse Ruiz**

As Attorney General, I will absolutely work to ensure that we address this critical issue. The Attorney General, through law enforcement work, and through its advocacy work can address these issues. Enforcing disability rights is key to ensuring that all people have full and equal access. That includes access to jobs, housing, education, the resources needed to keep people out of the criminal justice system. I am committed to continuing the important work of the office in these areas. Additionally, I am committed to continuing the work of the Disabilities Rights Bureau to give full access to the court system for people with disabilities. I believe the office, along with advocacy and community groups, must play a role educating those within the criminal justice system, from the top down, about the rights of people with disabilities so that they no longer fall through the cracks. The consent decree that will result from the Attorney General’s pending suit against the City of Chicago and Chicago Police Department will provide another vehicle through which to educate and require that the unique needs of people with disabilities are always in the forefront and are properly addressed.

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 3: People living with mental illness are more likely to encounter the criminal justice system and to be arrested, suggesting that mental illness is a factor in incarceration risk. The DOJ has also found that the Chicago Police Department used force against people in mental health crisis, where force might have been avoided. How will you work with the General Assembly and other state leaders to reduce risk to this group of people, and improve access to community-based mental health services throughout Illinois?**

**Sharon Fairley**

According a 2015 National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Chicago report, there are approximately 5 million Illinois adults with poor mental health, 2.1 million living with mental illness and 434,000 with a serious mental illness. In recent years, mental health funding has been dramatically cut in Illinois while Medicaid reimbursement has remained relatively flat. Cook County Jail has become the largest mental health provider in Illinois. Of approximately 76,400 people who were admitted to Cook County Jail in 2012, 45,840 were people with a mental illness.

After becoming chief administrator of the Independent Police Review Authority, the first policy recommendation made to the Chicago Police Department under my leadership related to the need to expand and fully support the department’s crisis intervention program and improve the protocols for taking in and responding to 911 calls involving individuals in crisis.

I would partner with community groups and advocacy groups and state and local law enforcement to ensure that all sworn officers across the state receive crisis intervention team (CIT) training. Research suggests that CIT officers are demonstrably better at their jobs. University of Illinois at Chicago professor Amy Watson, who studied such programs, found a reduction in use of force and injuries by CIT-trained officers. These officers also recorded fewer arrests of individuals living with mental illness or experiencing a crisis. That’s critically important because people in crisis need support, not jail. I will work with stakeholders, advocacy groups, law enforcement and mental health experts to promote adequate funding for mental health services, particularly access to such services. I will work to fund a comprehensive mental health system so that police officers will no longer continue to be the main gatekeepers to mental health treatment. Pursuant to Public Act 99-0894, the Illinois Mental Health Opportunities for Youth Diversion Task Force was created. The purpose of the Task Force is to divert youth with mental health conditions from the criminal justice system by reviewing existing diversion models and putting forth recommendations to the General Assembly and Governor. This review of existing diversion models will include Illinois and other states, and consider funding, feasibility, and other barriers. The Task Force recommendations may include legislative and administrative proposals. I support the work of the Task Force and will work to ensure that youth involved in the justice system have access to care and access to diversion programs.

**Aaron Goldstein**

It is an often cited and unfortunately true fact that our jails have now become our biggest mental health facilities. Budget cuts by the Rauner Administration have stripped away options for treatment and forced many into incarceration. There are many causes for this, but primarily from the AG office’s perspective they are threefold: end this pointless and racist drug war; end mass incarceration; and create real police reform where the community has enforcement power. I want communities that have faced discrimination and injustice at the hands of any police department, to have a voice in fixing this. In addition to a consent decree we must establish strict standards on use of force and training for officers in dealing with those who have mental health issues.

**Renato Mariotti**

As mentioned above in response to number 2, I intend to advocate for comprehensive reforms to the criminal justice system that include improved mental health services. As Attorney General, I will also advocate broadly for improved access to community-based mental health services at the state and local level to avoid having individuals become involved with the criminal justice system.

I also plan to work closely with law enforcement to make sure they have the resources they need to do their jobs well and that they are living up to their obligation as public servants. I will not tolerate anyone who abuses their position to take advantage of others. Nor can we allow a culture to continue that turns a blind eye to a pattern of inappropriate behavior. Law enforcement, together with community groups and criminal justice advocates, should be working partners in collaborative reform efforts. We have to be able to restore trust between government and people, law enforcement and communities. I will help lead that effort as Attorney General.

**Pat Quinn**

A key way to decrease incarceration risk for people living with mental illness is to have more law enforcement officers take Crisis Intervention Training. CIT is a nationally recognized and proven method to reduce the use of force, reducing arrests and improving access to mental health treatment. CIT-trained police officers are better able to de-escalate otherwise threatening situations and, instead of making an arrest, recognize the situations where the appropriate response is to bring an individual to a place where he or she will receive appropriate treatment.

The Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board offers CIT training, but many police departments do not have the resources to enroll their officers. In addition, although a new law requiring law enforcement officers to take a mental health awareness class represents progress, more needs to be done. I will advocate for additional CIT training and adequate funding.

Second, it is essential that the consent decree currently being negotiated between the Attorney General and the city of Chicago receive input from and address the needs of people living with mental illness.

Third, to improve access to community-based mental health services, I will explore the increased use of Crisis Triage Centers. CTC’s reduce the number of mentally ill individuals in our jail system; they stabilize individuals in a more suitable place than a jail or an emergency room and provide them quick access to mental health assistance. CTC’s can also reduce recidivism by providing individuals with wrap-around mental health care thereby improving mental health outcomes.

Fourth, we need to invest more in community-based mental health treatment to minimize incidents that trigger a police response, and bolster mental health treatment for individuals in the prison system as well as ensuring adequate follow-up plans for treatment when they are released. The three-year budget impasse during the Rauner Administration has done great damage to the mental health infrastructure in Illinois; that damage must be reversed.

**Kwame Raoul**

I will build on my work in the General Assembly to improve sentencing, prison conditions and alternatives to incarceration for all Illinoisans, particularly those at high risk of repeat encounters with the criminal justice system. I will also advocate for continued improvements to the sweeping law enforcement reform law I sponsored in 2015 to encourage and regulate the use of body cameras, require training in the use of force and systemic bias, ban chokeholds and keep rogue cops from getting back on the streets wearing the badge of another department. Regarding the CPD, I support the consent decree process, am extremely disappointed in the U.S. Department of Justice’s decision to abandon its role in that process and commit to continuing the current attorney general’s lawsuit to enforce the consent decree and its community involvement component.

My role as an independently elected constitutional officer will allow me to work closely with the General Assembly, and I will use this position and my 13 years of experience in the legislature to advocate for responsible, balanced budgets that do a better job of funding community-based mental health services, which are badly needed throughout the state not only as a public service, but as a deterrent to crime and recidivism.

**Nancy Rotering**

People with mental illness deserve better. They deserve better interactions with police. They

deserve better access to community-based mental health services. They deserve alternatives to

institutionalization. As Attorney General, I will first work with the General Assembly and advocate for greater funding for community-based mental health services. Over the past several years, we have seen continual cuts to funding for mental health services at both the state and local levels.

This is a pattern that simply cannot continue. We can and should use the Disability Rights Bureau along with my Disability Advisory Council working together to make strong legal and policy-focused arguments on why we need to ensure adequate funding for community-based mental health services.

As I mentioned previously, we also need to make sure that we expand and strengthen training for law enforcement. But we also need to provide for alternative means to approach mental health crises. When we constantly provide a criminal response (i.e. police with guns) to non-criminal mental health crisis situations, we place people living with mental illness at unnecessary risk of arrest and violence. We must train law enforcement - and hire the appropriately trained mental health professionals - to respond appropriately to mental health crises.

**Jesse Ruiz**

The simple fact is that we have to re-prioritize the funding of our social services in Illinois which have never been fully funded and took a devastating hit during Governor Rauner’s budget wars. There is nothing more essential than ensuring that our citizens get the services they need in all areas, and certainly in the area of mental health. My work with state leaders will focus on the fact that preventive services will keep people with mental health disabilities out of the criminal justice system and allow them to be productive members of our community. I think the Attorney General’s Office can also play a key role in training law enforcement how to protect and support a person with mental health issues rather than incarcerating them.

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 4: Will you commit to improving service to people with disabilities and Deaf people who have been victims of violent crimes? How will you achieve this?**

**Sharon Fairley**

Yes, I will commit to improving service to people with disabilities and deaf people who have been victims of violent crime. I will advocate for training and resources necessary to aid persons with disabilities who have been victims of violent crimes.

**Aaron Goldstein**

Yes. The Attorney General has an important role in making sure victims of crimes receive services and funding. One problem many victims of crime have faced is they are not aware that these services exist. I will work with community members and organizations to ensure that all victims of violent crimes are made aware of these services.

**Renato Mariotti**

Yes, I will commit to working to improve services to people with disabilities and deaf people who have been victims of violent crimes. I will work with community and advocacy groups to understand the needs of victims and develop, recommend, and/or implement comprehensive reforms. To the extent needed, I will advocate the state legislature and local governments to take action to implement the reforms I recommend. I will also work with other local and state agencies to improve existing resources for victims.

**Pat Quinn**

Yes. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and face particular challenges if they are a victim of a violent crime. I am familiar with last year’s Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority report that identified disabled people as a category of crime victims who are underserved. The Attorney General chairs the Violent Crimes Advisory Commission. If elected Attorney General, I will work with the other members of the Commission, as well as with disability organizations, to identify ways that the Attorney General’s office and other state agencies can improve service to victims who are disabled, and if necessary seek changes to the law. I also will partner with local law enforcement and other local officials to identify and implement ways that local units of government can better serve victims.

**Kwame Raoul**

One of my top priorities as attorney general will be the fair and effective allocation of crime victims’ assistance dollars to better serve individuals who have been the most victimized, communities that are historically vulnerable to the trauma of violent crime and victims who are most in need and can benefit most from the assistance of my office. Fulfilling this mission will involve studying who crime victims are in Illinois, where they live, what barriers they face and what they need. I will include crime victims with disabilities in this evaluation and consult with disability advocates concerning the best way to meet the needs of people with disabilities who are suffering from the trauma of violent crime.

**Nancy Rotering**

Yes. This starts with a commitment to engage and listen to people with disabilities, and especially those who have been victims of violent crimes. We must acknowledge that people with disabilities continue to face stigmas, discrimination, harassment and violence. The culture of hate and intolerance must change. I will work to support and listen to the voices of people with disabilities as they speak to the injustices they experience. Within the Division of Crime Victims Rights, we will include advocates for people with disabilities, recognizing the unique and on-going challenges that they face.

**Jesse Ruiz**

The Attorney General’s Office has already done work to ensure that the court system is accessible to people with disabilities, but more must be done. I think training of law enforcement, coupled with providing disability advocates within our law enforcement offices is essential to protecting victims of crime. Simply having ready access to a trained sign language interpreter or a mental health counselor can make all the difference to the interactions between law enforcement and a person with a disability who has been the victim of a crime.

[questions continued on next page]

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 5: Illinois has a history of community opposition to creating affordable housing for people with disabilities and extremely low incomes. As a result, developments serving this group are shut out of safe, stable, high-opportunity communities. Localities often use local zoning laws as a cover for this discriminatory “Not In My Backyard” opposition. As the State’s Chief Law Enforcement Officer, what will be your role in ensuring that this housing development process is protected from discrimination so the State can meet its court-ordered obligation to house people with disabilities and Federal Fair Housing laws?**

**Sharon Fairley**

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in 1990 with the goal of providing people with disabilities with equal opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Moreover, the federal Fair Housing Act (FHA) and the Illinois Human Rights Act bar discrimination against tenants and homeowners based on their disability. Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act also bars any public or private housing entity that receives federal funds from discriminating based on disability. I will work to enforce the federal and state housing laws so that the rights of persons with disabilities are protected and that they have access to affordable and accessible housing. The Illinois Attorney General’s Civil Rights Bureau protects the civil rights of all Illinois residents. The Bureau enforces civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination, works to strengthen the civil rights laws, and participates in community outreach programs. The Bureau also investigates complaints of patterns and practices of discrimination in housing, public accommodations, employment, and financial matters. I will work to ensure that the Civil Rights Bureau enforces the laws to protect persons with disabilities.

**Aaron Goldstein**

I have lived my life advocating for justice and as Attorney General I will continue that fight. If I see discrimination occurring I will act to stop it. If discrimination is occurring I will pursue legal action to stop it.

**Renato Mariotti**

As Attorney General, I will aggressively enforce Illinois human rights laws to ensure that the housing development process is protected from discrimination and that the state is meeting its court ordered obligations. I will also coordinate with community and advocacy groups to learn about the issues facing these housing developments and incidents of discrimination. I will conduct investigations wherever appropriate and either issue reports with my findings and recommendations or proceed to litigation and enforcement where the facts justify it.

**Pat Quinn**

I am extremely proud of receiving the Outstanding Advocate Award from the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities for my work to offer people with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to live in their community of choice.

When I served as Governor, I launched the Rebalancing Initiative, which enabled hundreds of people with disabilities to move out of institutions and into community-based care. The Arc of Illinois, which represents more than 200,000 people with disabilities and their families, awarded me the President’s Award in recognition of this program.

During my term as Governor, we also financed more than 2,100 units of new permanent supportive housing, closed the Jacksonville and Howe Developmental Centers which allowed residents to move into small community-based settings of their choice, and signed legislation making available rental subsidies to assist disabled people seeking supportive housing.

If elected Attorney General, I will continue this important work. I will aggressively use the tools available to the Attorney General’s office to ensure that the housing rights of people with disabilities under federal law and court orders are upheld. If necessary, I will bring legal actions against localities that unlawfully use zoning laws as a subterfuge to deprive disabled people of their rights.

**Kwame Raoul**

Zoning ordinances that specifically target housing for people with disabilities are discriminatory and violate the federal Fair Housing Act as well as state non-discrimination statutes. I will support and, as needed, assist with federal Fair Housing Act lawsuits, such as the one recently filed by the U.S. DOJ against the City of Springfield over an ordinance that shut a group home out of a residential neighborhood, and where federal authorities are unwilling to act, my office will be prepared to take action as appropriate. I am committed to enforcing all civil rights laws, including those upholding the housing rights of people with disabilities, and I am also aware that a change in attitudes is needed to combat “Not in My Backyard” campaigns. As a statewide elected official, I will speak up for people with disabilities as our neighbors, whom Illinois communities should welcome, not shun.

**Nancy Rotering**

I firmly believe that discrimination, in employment, housing or otherwise, cannot be tolerated. I am proud of the work that I have done as the founder and acting chair of a local legal aid clinic that specializes in immigration, domestic violence, and housing cases, and have worked to protect access to affordable and accessible housing. As Attorney General, it will be my role to enforce existing laws as it relates to fair access to housing. We must hold developers AND local

governments accountable, and not allow them to find workarounds to laws that protect people

with disabilities.

**Jesse Ruiz**

As Attorney General, I will work to secure integrated, accessible and affordable housing and ensure that the Office fully enforces the protections for people with disabilities afforded under the Illinois Human Rights Act. Further, we must look at the impact of local zoning laws and challenge them both at a legislative level andin the courts. The era of relegating housing for people with disabilities into only certain areas must end. Barriers like being kept out of neighborhoods comes from fear and lack of education and the Office can also be a powerful platform to discuss these issues openly and break down the barriers that exist.

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 6: What will you do to enforce the federal education rights of students with disabilities?**

**Sharon Fairley**

As the daughter of two dedicated public servants who spent their careers in pursuit of equality in education, I am fully cognizant of the obstacles children with disabilities often face in the educational setting. In fact, my mother, an elementary principle for decades, often spoke about how important it was to ensure that all students in her care had access to a quality education. Students in Illinois schools are protected by federal, state, and local laws that prevent discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and other categories. These laws also provide protection against bullying and require schools to take certain affirmative steps to guarantee an equal education for students with disabilities. I will work with education experts, disability rights organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that every child has access to education. I will also work with the disability community and other state attorneys general to file lawsuits to enforce the rights of students with disabilities.

**Aaron Goldstein**

As I stated before, I will be on the frontlines to advocate for justice to enforce the law and protect the rights of students with disabilities. That typically means, pursuing legal action to enforce the law which I will not hesitate to do.

**Renato Mariotti**

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions called the federal guarantees for students with disabilities “a big factor in accelerating the decline in civility and discipline in classrooms all over America,” and “maybe the single most irritating problem for teachers throughout America today.” These are disgraceful and ignorant statements. Unlike Mr. Sessions, I believe deeply in protecting the right to an opportunity for a full and fair education for all students in Illinois. I also believe deeply in treating all students with dignity and respect as they pursue their education.

I understand the critical role education plays in each one of our lives. My father didn’t graduate from high school; he’s still a cashier at Walmart. My parents each worked two jobs to put me through school because they knew that education was my greatest opportunity to climb the economic ladder. Without leadership at every level of government that is passionate about public education, the fate of our school children is in jeopardy. I will fight to ensure that every public-school child in Illinois has the same opportunities I was fortunate enough to receive.

When the Trump Administration fails in its obligation to protect the federal education rights of students with disabilities, I will step in to protect Illinois students. I will bring enforcement actions to ensure that we protect the rights, the dignity, and the education of Illinois students. I will advocate in Springfield and in local communities to take action at the state and local levels to protect the interests of these students. I will partner with other state Attorneys General to protect the rights of students in Illinois and across the United States. I will be a vigorous advocate against the efforts of the Trump Administration to violate the rights of students and people with disabilities.

**Pat Quinn**

All schools, including universities, community colleges, and elementary and secondary schools, must comply with federal education rights of students with disabilities. In cases where there is evidence that schools are systemically violating the rights of disabled students I will engage with those schools and initiate legal action if necessary to obtain compliance.

My commitment to quality education for all students is deep and longstanding. When I was Governor I advocated for sufficient revenue to support elementary and secondary schools, and colleges and universities, including programs to support the special needs of students with disabilities. Following my election in 2010, I proposed and signed four straight budgets that provided needed funding for education as well as mental health and other human services.

I also signed legislation to improve educational opportunities for students with dyslexia. This law identifies dyslexia as a learning disability and established an advisory board to develop teacher and school administrator training.

**Kwame Raoul**

As a parent of a child that has needed accommodations from her school because of disabilities it is a high priority for me to make certain that all students with disabilities within the state of the Illinois have a fair opportunity to excel in their academic pursuits. For personal experience, I know that educational institutions and those who are employed within them often need outside pressure in order for them to appropriately accommodate students with disabilities. As Attorney General, I would make certain that I would use my office to ensure that all academic institutions within the state follow the ADA and make certain that all students with disabilities are appropriately accommodated.

**Nancy Rotering**

I believe in a strong and robust public school system. I was fortunate to get an excellent public

school education, and my children have gone through the public school system. One of the things that has been very clear to me is that we need to fight to make sure that ALL students can and should have access to a high quality public education.

As a parent of a child with a disability, I spent years advocating for my child and the children of

other families as they have maneuvered through their school systems. I fully understand the

impacts of diminished resources, uncompromising administrations, and isolation that can affect

students with disabilities. I will be a staunch advocate for students with disabilities and their

families.

As IL Attorney General, I will join with Democratic attorneys general from across the nation to fight the Trump administration’s dangerous agenda. We cannot let Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos rollback the many protections that we have won at the federal level.

But we also must fight back against what is happening at the local level. The Attorney General must be willing to step in when school districts are not providing adequate accommodations or special education services. And the Attorney General must watch very closely as the new private school scholarship program is rolled out and how private schools use public dollars. We cannot allow any school to be able to get around meeting state and federal requirements for students with disabilities, even if they are private schools.

**Jesse Ruiz**

I have spent decades fighting for improvements in education both at the state and federal level for all school children in Illinois. I will continue the great work of the Office to challenge for-profit colleges and universities that prey on vulnerable students, including those with disabilities. At the K-12 level, I will work to make sure that the same scrutiny is applied to private companies operating within our school systems. In 2014, I helped former colleagues at the Illinois State Board of Education lobby the general assembly, and CPS, to support the passage of HB 4527, which compelled charter schools to provide special services to students with disabilities. While not directly involved in the enforcement of federal education laws like IDEA, the Office can take a strong lead through education and training to help students and families understand the resources available to help protect their rights within our education systems.

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 7: How will you assure that the new Medicaid Managed Care program addresses both the acute and long term health care and support needs of people with disabilities?**

**Sharon Fairley**

I am committed to protecting access to health care for all Illinois citizens. I believe that access to quality health care is a right, and I will fight so that everyone in Illinois has access to acute and long-term health care services. The Illinois Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit consists of attorneys working under a federal grant controlled by the Illinois State Police. Under the grant, Assistant Attorneys General are required to perform criminal and civil prosecutions in Illinois State and Federal courts. Medicaid cases relate to fraud on the Medicaid/Medicare system and the abuse and neglect of long term care facility residents. To protect our most vulnerable citizens and help safeguard the state's Medicaid program, I will work aggressively to investigate and prosecute those who would rob taxpayers of millions of dollars each year and divert scarce health care resources from the persons most in need, including those with disabilities.

**Aaron Goldstein**

I will review all health care laws to ensure that those who need and are entitled to care are receiving. If I believe the law is not being followed and the needs of people with disabilities are not being met, I will pursue legal action.

**Renato Mariotti**
As Attorney General, I will closely monitor our state and local agencies to ensure compliance with the law and I will pursue litigation as needed if the agencies fail their obligation to provide for the needs of people with disabilities. More broadly, I believe we need to do a better job of ensuring that all Illinois residents have access to health care. I will advocate for state and local agencies to do more than the current law requires, through new laws or programs that allow for improved care and services, including broader provider networks, better coordination between acute and long-term services and support, improved outreach and beneficiary engagement, and improved quality measurements that take into account the individualized experiences and outcomes that can be unique to people with disabilities.

**Pat Quinn**

I am very concerned that the managed care companies recently put in place by the Rauner Administration will not provide the necessary and customized care required to meet the needs of many people with disabilities. I also believe that many disabled people require a caretaker in their home to provide adequate care; not contractors whose focus may be minimizing costs. I will monitor this troubling situation very closely; if I find that people with disabilities or others are not receiving adequate care I will use all of the tools available to the Attorney General’s office to remedy the situation. I take extremely seriously our state’s obligation to provide quality care to people who are disabled or ill, and to treat them with dignity.

**Kwame Raoul**

In the General Assembly, I was a vocal critic of the Rauner administration’s approach to Medicaid managed care and questioned the Department of Healthcare and Family Services as to plans to provide for people with disabilities, medically fragile children and people with complex medical needs. While care coordination is a worthy goal that can improve care for people with disabilities and/or multiple medical conditions, the capitated model, through which a managed care organization receives only a set amount of money from the State for each plan enrollee, regardless of the complexity of his or her needs and the cost of his or her care, can discourage MCOs from providing the highest quality of care for the low-income seniors, people with disabilities and others who rely on them for their health. Recent audits of the pre-expansion program raise even more questions about the oversight of managed care and the billions being spent on it.

I will continue to advocate for safeguards, transparency and adequate oversight for the new managed care contracts, and when representing the State in any actions brought under consent decrees and concerning the health care, services and living arrangements provided to people with disabilities, I will use my independent position to put pressure on HFS and DHS to ensure statutory and court-enforced standards are met or, on the alternative, that populations with complex needs are exempted from mandatory managed care and assisted through more appropriate mechanisms.

My staff and I will also remain informed of and involved in any effort by Illinois to submit an 1115 waiver request for a Medicaid work requirement, as Kentucky and Indiana have done and as the Rauner administration says it is considering. I oppose Medicaid work requirements on the basis that they can discourage people from obtaining the treatment they may need before they can seek work. Following in the footsteps of my father, who was a community physician on the South Side of Chicago, I regard health care as a human right – not a luxury that must be earned. If HFS does submit a work requirement proposal, I will use every tool at my disposal, as well as my voice of advocacy, to ensure that people with disabilities are not caught up in these requirements and threatened with the loss of needed services. If called upon to defend such a requirement in court, I will not defend any aspects of a waiver program that I believe do not comply with state and federal Medicaid law.

**Nancy Rotering**

As Attorney General, my Health Care Bureau and Disability Rights Bureau will work together to

monitor and provide oversight over the new Medicaid Managed Care program. The rapid transition to this new program has already raised serious red flags, and we must make sure that both HFS and the MCOs are providing adequate care and services. We must demand transparency and accountability on how these services are being delivered, and that the program does not just become a way to use privatization to cut rates and services to save money.

**Jesse Ruiz**

I am certainly committed to ensuring that the Office hears and works with the advocacy committee to ensure that the new Medicaid Managed Care program addresses the acute and long term health care needs of people with disabilities.

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 8: The Attorney General’s office has a Health Care Bureau, which is responsible for assisting consumers with difficulties they encounter in obtaining health care services and insurance benefits. For example, people with physical disabilities often face disputes with providers over durable medical equipment, including wheelchairs, and require assistance through, among other things, enforcement of the Illinois Assistive Technology Act. How would you work to make the Health Care Bureau a vigorous advocate for people with disabilities in obtaining the equipment and services they need?**

**Sharon Fairley**

The Attorney General’s Health Care Bureau was created to assist consumers with difficulties they encounter in obtaining health care services and insurance benefits through mediation, investigation and enforcement actions. The bureau also advocates for laws and policies that enhance the health care rights of consumers and educates consumers about those rights. Working in conjunction with the Health Care Bureau, the Disability Rights Bureau works to mediate complaints about assistive technology equipment, whether over a dispute regarding the denial of a refund or replacement of assistive technology. The Disability Rights Bureau also regularly provides technical assistance and referrals to individuals with disabilities and public and private entities seeking to comply with disability rights laws. The Bureau conducts disability rights training programs for law enforcement, architects, engineers, building code officials and inspectors, judges and court personnel, business owners, disability rights organizations, and other groups upon request. I will work to ensure that both the Health Care Bureau and Disability Rights Bureaus are staffed and have the resources they need to be effective advocates for people with disabilities so that they can obtain the equipment and services they need.

**Aaron Goldstein**

I will make sure those within the Health Care Bureau are properly trained and aware of the issues people with disabilities face. And since it is an office within my purview, I will make sure those in the Health Care Bureau are properly advocating for those with disabilities.

**Renato Mariotti**

As Attorney General, I will be a fierce advocate for the rights of Illinois residents, notably those people who are traditionally underrepresented or who lack the resources to advocate for themselves. The Health Care Bureau will do its part to ensure that people with disabilities are getting the health care services and insurance benefits to which they are entitles. It will investigate insurance and health care providers whenever necessary to uncover patterns of non-compliance and will pursue litigation and enforcement actions to obtain the needed relief. It will likewise vigorously enforce the Illinois Assistive Technology Act to ensure Illinois residents with disabilities get the assistance they deserve.

**Pat Quinn**

I will recruit and hire competent staff who are zealous advocates for the disabled, and will provide them robust training and support. I also will work with the disability community to ensure that people with disabilities and their families are aware of the services provided by the Attorney General’s office.

**Kwame Raoul**

Starting on day one, my first priority is to evaluate the staff and resources of each division of the Office of the Attorney General and ensure that each is adequately resourced to handle its assigned task in faithfulness to the people of Illinois. Health care access was a priority of mine in the General Assembly, where I co-sponsored the expansion of Medicaid in Illinois under the Affordable Care Act, and I will make sure the Attorney General’s Health Care Bureau is able to promptly and professionally handle public complaints and resolve disputes, including those concerning the provision of DME and assistive technology. I am committed to enforcing accessibility law and will make sure my office is able to follow through on that commitment.

**Nancy Rotering**

As a parent volunteer, I worked with Lurie Children’s Hospital (then Children’s Memorial) to create a program that helped train medical residents to understand the needs of patients with disabilities and their families. One example we used was a family running hours late for an appointment because of the challenges of using public transit with medical equipment. I am committed to making sure that the Attorney General’s office and its Health Care Bureau are vigorous advocates for people with disabilities. Given the current role of the Attorney General and the challenges to justice in both Illinois and the nation, I do not believe we have adequate resources in the AG's office. Now, more than ever, we need to expand the role of the office, and expand the resources available. This is both a matter of enforcing rights and consumer protection.

But even without more resources, we need to make sure that we have the most effective and most efficient office as possible. We also need to use all the resources that we have at our disposal. We must not only work efficiently internally, but we must work with other partners and allies, including both local governments and advocacy organizations to together be the vigorous advocates that we need to be.

**Jesse Ruiz**

I will use the full power of the Attorney General’s office to protect every consumer and taxpayers across Illinois and that includes people with disabilities. For years, corporations have taken advantage of working class families, it’s time for the law to be on the side of the people. The Attorney General’s office will remain vigilant for new schemes and scams, protecting the rights of all Illinoisans throughout the state. The Health Care Bureau is an essential tool in this fight and I will ensure that it has the resources and support it needs from leadership in the Office.

**CANDIDATE QUESTION 9: Finally, what will you do to ensure the voice of the disability community is woven into decision-making on issues that affect the disability community? And, more specifically, what commitment will you make to fill staff and support positions with individuals with disabilities?**

**Sharon Fairley**

As attorney general, I look forward to an open, ongoing dialogue with the disability community and will always seek input from that community on issues, policies, and legislation that could impact individuals with disabilities. I will also be open to hearing feedback on how well the office is meeting the needs of the community. I hope to identify a group of thought leaders and community groups that I can meet with on a regular basis for this purpose. I will also work to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to staff and support positions in the attorney general’s office and am committed to regular reporting so that the community can assess how well the office is acting on that pledge.

**Aaron Goldstein**

I am running for Attorney General to bring justice to Illinois. We must not only be an organization that is full of skilled advocates on behalf of all Illinoisans but an office that reflects us all. I commit to making sure that the office is as diverse as possible, with all voices and perspectives represented, including those individuals with disabilities.

**Renato Mariotti**

As Attorney General, I will ensure that communities, advocacy groups, and citizens with disabilities have their voices heard in my office. I intend to work closely with community organizations, including those who advocate on behalf of citizens with disabilities. I will encourage input and insight from the many bright and passionate organizations that represent the interests of the underrepresented, to ensure that my office understands the threats faced by those communities and the actions we will take proactively to protect their fundamental rights.Involving more citizens, with diverse perspectives and experiences, will improve the decision-making process and it will give folks the meaningful voice in government that they deserve.

I also believe my staff and appointees should represent the wonderful diversity of the people of Illinois, including the many qualified citizens with disabilities. I intend to hire staff and appointees that are diverse across gender, racial, geographic, and economic factors, among other things, to ensure that I am educated and advised by lawyers and staff with an understanding of the needs and issues faced by the people of Illinois. I want my office to look like the State of Illinois.

**Pat Quinn**

As I have in the past, I will work with the disability community to obtain their insights and ideas. State government should reflect the diversity of Illinois. This is both a matter of fairness and because government is then better able to understand the needs of the people it serves. When I was Governor, I filled positions with smart and public-spirited people who were disabled (including to the Illinois Housing Development Authority). As Attorney General, I will do the same.

**Kwame Raoul**

On all issues coming before my office that affect the rights and protections of particular constituencies, I know the best approach is to listen to the individuals directly affected and the various organizations that help represent them. I will seek out the perspective of people with disabilities on actions concerning health care, education, civil rights and other areas of impact for the disability community. I will also seek to retain and hire staff with experience in disability law and/or who are themselves individuals with disabilities.

**Nancy Rotering**

Disability rights are first and foremost about securing equal rights and opportunities for all people with disabilities. But, more importantly, it is about making sure that people with disabilities have all options necessary to live the life that they choose - ensuring maximum independence and consumer choice in all settings. It is about making sure that nothing we do in government impacting people with disabilities is done without working with people with disabilities to make sure that we do that right.

I am fully committed to having a strong and diverse staff. Too often when we talk about diversity, we only talk about gender and racial diversity. We need to think bigger than that, and pursue a truly diverse and qualified staff that includes people with disabilities. When our local public school system created a diversity curriculum, my voice was the voice demanding that we including people with disabilities. It will continue to be so as Attorney General.

**Jesse Ruiz**

Yes, it is important that the office of Attorney General looks like the residents it represents. I am fully committed to hiring members of my team that reflect the full diversity of Illinois, including hiring people with disabilities. Throughout my career, I have been a champion of bringing diversity into the legal profession and this same work will continue at the Attorney General’s Office. During my campaign, I have reached out to Illinois’ diverse communities, both in person and through the media, to make sure they are aware of the importance of this race. I also will meet with community leaders to make sure that our platform addresses the needs of all communities. Once in office, I will make sure that my staff and I meet with community and advocacy groups in the disability rights community, not only to get input, but also to work hand in hand on initiatives. It is only by opening the Office up and creating partnerships in the community, that we will be able to achieve true change.

[end]