

**Children's Action Alliance Questionnaire – Lela Alston**

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- 1) The Affordable Care Act has provided protections for 2.8 million Arizonans living with a pre-existing condition and has provisions that extend care to former foster youth school-aged children, and hundreds of thousands of Arizonans. However, the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act is under review by the Supreme Court. **Do you support efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act?**
  - a.  Yes
  - b.  No
  - c. Comments:
    - i. Healthcare is an undeniable human right. I will always be opposed to repealing the Affordable Care Act and other efforts to make it harder to receive quality health coverage.
- 2) Medicaid is a major source of federal funds in Arizona, with every dollar of state investment drawing down \$3.20 in federal funds. The Joint Legislative Budget Committee projects a major state budget shortfall in the next state fiscal year (FY2021). **Would you support cuts to Medicaid provider rates, member eligibility, or covered benefits in order to make up budget shortfalls?**
  - a.  Yes
  - b.  No
  - c. Comments:
    - i. Cutting Medicaid in any way to cover a budget shortfall is unacceptable and I will vehemently oppose any effort to do so.
- 3) The Invest in Education Act is a ballot proposition that restores hundreds of millions of dollars annually in K-12 education funding to solve the teacher-shortage crisis, lower class sized, hire aides and counselors, and expand career and technical education. It raises the state income tax rate for income above \$250,000 for individuals and for income above \$500,000 for households. **Do you support the Invest in Education ballot proposition to raise new resources dedicated to public schools?**
  - a.  Yes
  - b.  No
  - c. Comments:
    - i. Investing in public schools is the best investment Arizona can make in its future. Restoring the education funding our public schools deserve is one of my top priorities and I am fully supportive of the Invest in Education initiative. I will always be an ally for public schools at the state legislature. I am circulating the petitions and supporting the effort on social media.
- 4) The Arizona Education Progress Meter recognizes that children with access to quality, early learning opportunities are more prepared for kindergarten. As they go forward in school and in life, they are less likely to need special education or be held back a grade. They are more likely to graduate high school and go on to college. But many children start kindergarten already behind their peers. Only 21 percent of Arizona preschool-aged children today benefit from quality, early learning in child care and preschool compared to the progress meter goal of 45 percent by 2030. **Will you support using state and federal child care funds to connect more young children with quality, early learning in preschool and child care to move Arizona toward the progress meter goal?**
  - a.  Yes

b.  No

c. Comments:

i. Preschool has been proven time and again to be highly beneficial for the lifelong outcomes of a student and I support using state and federal funding to increase access to quality early learning programs and meet the meter goal.

5) In 2018, 13 percent of children in Arizona (204,363) were being raised by their grandparents or other relatives. In many instances, these relatives have stepped up to care for children who were being abused and neglected, keeping the safe and out of the foster care system. Nationally, informal kinship caregivers keep millions of children out of the overburdened child welfare system and save taxpayers more than \$4 billion each year Even prior to the COVID-19 crisis, these families faced barriers to securing adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Before the Great Recession, kinship caregivers were able to access “child-only” benefits through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, also known as cash assistance. These benefits helped these families meet the critical basic needs of the relative children in their care. **Do you support restoring access to “child-only” TANF benefits for children who are being raised by kin?**

a.  Yes

b.  No

c. Comments:

i. I do support restoring “child-only TANF and additionally, have been proposing an increase in assistance to kinship care families in the State Senate. I sponsored SB 1315 in the last legislative session and was able to get it out of the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support. There was only one no vote! SB1315 would have raised the kinship care stipend to \$250 rather than the current \$75 per month. I am confident that an increase would have occurred this past session if the session had not been cut short by the pandemic.

6) The events over the last few weeks have brought widespread focus on the systemic racism that is deeply embedded in our society. **If elected, would you hold your colleagues and other elected officials accountable to specific criminal justice and police reforms for systemic change?**

a.  Yes

b.  No

c. Comments:

i. Current policing practices and other aspects of the criminal justice system are long overdue for change. I will hold my colleagues accountable on police reforms and help to bring the changes we desperately need. I joined my fellow caucus members in asking the Governor for a special session devoted to police reform. I hope he will honor our request.