

## **Jeremy Bynum, Candidate for Alaska House of Representatives, District 1**

### **Disability Law Center Candidate Survey Responses**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important candidate survey. I appreciate the work your organization does to advocate for Alaskans with disabilities, and I value the chance to share my vision on these critical issues. Additionally, I am always open to learn more about the issues and work together to find solutions. Below are my responses to the survey questions, and if you have any further questions or would like more information, please feel free to reach out at any time.

#### **1. Streamlining Eligibility for Critical Support Programs**

I understand the urgency of ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive timely access to Medicaid, food assistance, and housing support. To address chronic delays in the Alaska Division of Public Assistance, I would advocate for streamlining eligibility requirements by modernizing our processing systems and improving inter-agency collaboration. Investing in automated application processing systems that can handle initial eligibility reviews will reduce backlogs. Additionally, I would work to ensure that there is adequate staffing to meet demand, potentially through targeted recruitment campaigns or partnerships with local organizations, to fill essential roles. Performance accountability metrics should also be implemented to ensure program effectiveness while reducing bureaucratic hurdles.

#### **2. Protecting the Rights and Autonomy of Individuals with Disabilities**

I am a strong advocate for individuals' rights to make informed decisions about their healthcare and personal well-being. This means ensuring that people with disabilities have access to clear, understandable information about their options and are supported in their decision-making. I would support legislation and initiatives that promote autonomy by improving access to community-based supports, ensuring that caregivers and service providers respect personal choices, and safeguarding their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). My priority would be on ensuring that Alaskans with disabilities have the services and supports they need to live independently and thrive within their communities.

#### **3. Addressing the Guardianship Crisis**

The shortage of qualified guardians is a critical issue. To address this, I would explore expanding programs that recruit and train professional and family guardians, and support to those who take on this important responsibility. Partnering with educational institutions, we could also develop certification programs to ensure that guardians are well-equipped to manage the legal, financial, and personal care needs of those they serve. Additionally,

creating a system of oversight to ensure that guardians fulfill their duties responsibly will protect vulnerable individuals.

#### **4. Supporting In-State Mental Health Services for Children**

Alaska must invest in expanding its in-state mental health services to ensure that children with behavioral health disabilities can access appropriate care in their own communities. My vision includes building out our network of community-based mental health programs, increasing funding for local mental health centers, and collaborating with existing healthcare providers to expand in-state treatment options. I also believe in strengthening partnerships between the state and nonprofit organizations that specialize in mental and behavioral health, so that more resources are available for families. Reducing reliance on out-of-state facilities should be a top priority for Alaska's mental health strategy.

#### **5. Improving Education for Students with Disabilities**

Education is a fundamental right for all children, and students with disabilities deserve access to quality education. I would encourage programs and processes that will work with schools and educators to ensure that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are effectively implemented, with proper accommodations and modifications in place. Increasing parental involvement in the IEP process is critical, and I would advocate for better communication and transparency between parents, educators, administrators, and local governments. Raising awareness of the rights guaranteed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is also essential, and I would support initiatives that train educators and families on how to fully utilize these protections.