



ARRM

2016 Minnesota State House and Senate Candidate Questionnaire

Section #1: About Yourself

Your Name: Jim Abeler

District you are running in: 35

Question #1: Please provide a short background about yourself.

Current: State Senator SD 35, chiropractor. Previously: 16 year State Representative

Question #2: What do you hope to accomplish by running for office? What will your main priorities be at the Capitol if you are elected?

Strong interest in healthcare, education, transportation, environment. Concerned about future of disability

services and long-term care.

Question #3: What experience or connections, if any, do you have to the disability community?

Long history of engagement with members of the disability community, with clients, families and providers.

Understand the many challenges in the system with staffing, waiting lists, reimbursements and access to services.

Section #2: Our Workforce Crisis

Question #1: Our industry is facing a workforce crisis. There are simply not enough people to provide the direct care needed for people with disabilities to lead independent lives. Given that the overwhelming majority of funding for disability services comes from the government, and low wages are a driving force behind high rates of staff turnover, what ideas would you offer for helping to create a livable wage for our direct support professionals and caregivers?

Need both funding and reform. There is barely ever going to be enough state funding and certainly not enough

people to fill the system's needs without changing how we serve those in need of special long-term services.

I support additional funding and development of career tracks to attract and retain staff.

Question #2: As technology continues to become a bigger part of everyone's lives, there are numerous products that can be used by individuals with disabilities which offer them increased independence, including things as simple as apps on cell phones and tablets. Some technology can supplement staff while others can substitute for staff. Would you support the use of public dollars to increase the availability and use of technology?

We must increase our use of technology to maximize the available human resources.

Section #3: The Sustainability of our System

Question #1: Minnesota's Olmstead Plan includes a broad series of key activities our state must accomplish to ensure people with disabilities are living, learning, working and enjoying life in the most integrated setting appropriate for their needs. In 2015, a set of very ambitious goals and benchmarks were finalized and approved by the Minnesota courts to help ensure that the intent of the Olmstead Plan is realized. What is your role as a legislator to oversee and ensure that those goals are met?

We must continue to work toward our Olmstead goals. The department has shown weak leadership in this area,

to the detriment of both clients and providers.

Question #2: Affordable housing is an issue for many people in Minnesota. A cornerstone of Minnesota's Olmstead Plan is the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to live as independently as they choose. As a legislator how would you strategically expand availability of affordable housing with accessibility features for Minnesotans with disabilities?

Housing options are essential. We must reconsider the state requirements that re barriers, request waivers

from federal regulations that are unnecessary, and allow the GRH to follow the person. This list is not complete.

Question #3: Our industry has seen an influx of "unfunded mandates" - items that cost providers additional money without subsequent compensation, such as the increase in minimum wage, the Affordable Care Act, increased regulatory fees and the new Department of Labor Overtime Rule to name a few. When the government adds a new mandate what is its responsibility in supporting government funded businesses to pay for those mandates?

Unfunded (and unfounded) mandates should not exist. New requirements that state and Feds impose should be funded.
