

Questions posed to a panel of candidates for the Florida Legislature by Palm Beach County youth on September 25, 2008:

When I aged out of foster care, I was not given any money to get myself situated in my new residential facility. At the new facility I am responsible to provide my own money for food, to wash clothes, buy toiletries and any other personal needs items. I am told that even prisoners are given a set amount of money to get them situated. My question is, why are youth aging out of foster care not given the same courtesy as prisoners and would you be willing to pass legislation to correct this injustice?

Studies indicate that youth who have "aged out" of foster care are at a significant disadvantage when it comes to employment, education, homelessness, mental health, medical insurance coverage, involvement with the criminal justice system, early pregnancy and poverty. How would you go about changing these disadvantages?

Research suggests that one in seven youth suffer from homelessness after they age out of foster care, suffer over the lack health coverage and 50% of the seven will drop out of school. How would you address this issue?

Right now, young people are required to age out of foster care at the age of 18. Eighteen, in my opinion, is too young to face the decisions we face without the safety net a family provides. Would you consider extending foster care and health coverage until age 21 to provide this safety net for youth aging out of the foster care system?

There are many adolescents who have a serious drug and alcohol problem, however there are not enough programs available to address their needs and often they are put on a waiting list of several months or more. How would you ensure there are enough programs available to address their needs in an appropriate time frame?

Many youth are behind academically and in residential programs to help them overcome their problems. Currently summer school is limited as to what courses the youth can take, if it is offered at all. What is your stance on mandatory year round school for all residential programs?

Services available for drug and alcohol treatment are often not available in the immediate community where the youth lives. As the vast majority of these youth come from low income working class families, transportation becomes a very real problem. What would you propose to eliminate transportation as being a barrier to these services?

Many youth in the juvenile justice system are in need of substance abuse treatment, however the majority of these programs available do not directly address substance abuse issues. What would you propose to help these

youth and their families get the substance abuse treatment they desperately need?

Are the candidates in support of designating youth caregivers with a level of responsibility as an "at risk" population to increase access to educational services?

Will the candidates support the school district's recognition of hours that youth caregivers with a high level of responsibility serve at home as hours for community service?

Will the candidates support provision of continuing education for teachers and health care providers about youth caregiver issues?

How can our legislators get other citizens to help struggling teenage mothers?

How can our legislators change the system to end the cycle of poverty for teen mothers?

What can our legislators do to advocate for scholarships and incentive programs so that teen mothers can further their education?

What can our legislators do to help teen parents so that they don't feel like they are at a dead end with no options left?

How can our legislators ensure that teen moms receive proper mental health and social services?