

2022 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire



Name: Gerry Pollet

District Number: 46

Position: Representative (Position #1)

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1. Do you have a personal connection or professional experience with someone who has an intellectual/developmental disability (IDD), and if so, would you describe its impact on you? If not, what impact do you want to have for people with IDD and their families?

I have several personal connections. My family experience in having to advocate for Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for a child led to my over two decades of advocacy for improving special education services, assessment and access – especially for those without resources. We lived through the constant attention and effort required even with our privilege and ability to advocate and knowing that our circumstances were far less demanding than for tens of thousands of families in Washington. I have developed connections with constituents and others who have spent years waiting for respite services and, therefore, have never had a day that they were not caring for a loved one 24/7.

I'm also acutely aware of the huge gaps we have in transitional supports from public school, and the incredible dedication of the staff who provide those intensive individual services (and appreciate recognition for my work on transitional services as well as from the ARC).

I will continue to work for our State to one day be a leader in providing supports from birth through independent living and support for families for all our residents who have an IDD, including providing them with services from before kindergarten through graduation and successful transition (including postsecondary opportunities).

I fully embrace the philosophy of "Nothing About Us Without Us." I will continue to work to refine and reintroduce HB 1802, which would legally ensure that every board, commission or other entity which addresses policies that impact the lives of persons with IDD and other disabilities has a significant proportion of its members with the disabilities that the board is addressing or will be impacted by the decisions.

2. What are your top three priorities and how would you ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families are included in them?

My top legislative priorities reflect that I first ran for the Legislature to be a champion for education, and to have a champion in the Legislature who understands and prioritizes reversing our dismal record in special education. KING 5 News called me "the Legislature's top advocate for special education." I've led modest progress in lifting the unconscionable cap on state funding of special ed from 12% of students to 13.5%. This leaves districts short by over \$300 million in what they currently spend in levy funds for special ed. That means they deny services and therapy, don't fund IAs/aides to attend IEP meetings, do not have interpreters or even non-English materials for IEPs, and force parents or guardians to wait for a year or more to have evaluations. This year, I will continue to push for fully funding special education as part of Basic Education. I am developing a legislative package to require the State to pay for and meet greatly accelerated timelines for evaluations and providing services. I look forward to working with The Arc of WA and The Arc of King County to develop this package along with the Office of Education Ombud and numerous other advocates and experts.

As a faculty member at the University of Washington School of Public Health, my priorities include continuing to provide expert guidance for our State's COVID Pandemic policies and to dramatically overhaul our public health system to prepare for future Pandemics, epidemics and major public health challenges.

I continue to prioritize increasing access to the opportunities and promise of post-secondary education for every Washingtonian to break intergenerational poverty and offer fulfilling life career choices. I've led on reducing tuition, offering free community college, providing the advising and mentoring supports that enable students with

disabilities and first generation students to succeed in obtaining career training or degrees.
Read more on priorities at [gerrypollet.com](https://www.gerrypollet.com)

3. If cuts became necessary due to a recession or economic downturn, how would you protect services that people with IDD and their families need?

First and foremost, I am a champion to changing our tax system to tax wealth and not tax the poor, retirees, working families who most need health care, housing, services and education from our state and local governments. I was an early prime sponsor of a capital gains tax and continue to work for taxes on wealth because our State has one of the highest concentrations of wealthy individual and corporations in the world – but they do not pay anywhere close to their share of our needs to fund services, healthcare and education. Before cutting essential services, I insist we tax wealth and close massive corporate tax loopholes.

We cannot slip backward on the poor provision of services for persons with IDD and their families. We need to continue to reduce wait times for services. I will continue to argue that we have a constitutional and moral duty to increase funding, rather than cut.

There are many areas of state funding that do not provide essential human services and are discretionary. But these pale in their total to the nondiscretionary costs, which is why we need to tax corporate and individual wealth.

4. Is there other information you'd like constituents with developmental disabilities and their family and friends to know?

I will continue to be an accessible champion for my constituents with IDD and their families and for all persons and families statewide. I will continue to be “the Legislature’s top advocate for special education.” I will continue to be a champion for transitional services from public school along with pre-k services and supports for persons with IDD in postsecondary programs.

I have spent two years working with self-advocates for persons with IDD along with organizational advocates and allies to develop our “Nothing About Us Without Us” legislation, HB 1802. I will reintroduce the legislation to ensure that every board, commission or other entity which addresses policies that impact the lives of persons with IDD and other disabilities has a significant proportion of its members with the disabilities that the board is addressing or will be impacted by the decisions. The legislation also will require the Legislature itself to be accessible for persons with IDD and other disabilities.

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