**Anibal Valdez-Ortega is running for US Congress Special Election 25th District as a Democrat**

* Info - Peer Action 4 Change

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Questions for elected officials  
Peer Action 4 Change is an organization with more than 1,000 members in Los Angeles County dedicated to making life better for mental health consumers, clients, survivors and others in recovery. Our membership requests that you answer the following questions to help them make decisions on who to vote for in the March 3, 2020 election.

1. What is more important for improving mental health currently, more locked facilities or more peer services? Please explain.

Peer services to show that people care and want to be involved.

2. What is your opinion on making it easier to conserve homeless people?

I'd want to make sure the legal and medical process is upheld to protect their rights.

3. Should people be forced to take psych medications against their will?

Only in very limited circumstances and only when their lives are at risk.

4. Do you think that the number of people incarcerated with mental health issues is an issue? If so, how would you address it?

Yes, the number of incarcerated is too high. We must increase mental health spending.

5. Currently it is possible to conserve someone in California on a limited conservatorship for life with the signature of one doctor. Should limited conservatorships be changed to require a doctor of the person’s choice or more than one doctor? Should limited conservatorships be reviewed on a regular basis, as LPS conservatorships are?

More than one doctor would be preferable and it should be reviewed on a yearly basis.

6. Adult Protective Services is not allowed to take a complaint from a conserved person as technically that person has to be represented by their conservator in all affairs. Should the law be changed to allow people on conservatorships or others to report abuse perpetrated by conservators?

There should be a neutral third party to address these concerns.

7. What is your opinion on Peer Certification in California that would set standards for mental health and substance abuse peer workers allowing the workers to bill Medi-Cal?

I think peer review is essential but there must be a neutral governmental watchdog to find abuses.

8. Self-help support groups are an essential tool to recovery in mental health and substance abuse as they reduce hospitalizations, medication needed, relapses, incarcerations and increase personal responsibility, healthy behaviors and employment. Would you require that each peer worker have knowledge of the dozens of free self-help support group programs in your district in order to be certified?

Yes.

9. Do you agree that hospitals and other facilities should be required to video tape with sound all incidents of use of seclusion and restraint for psychiatric reasons, and provide the person who was secluded or restrained with a copy of the tape, upon request, in order to reduce the over use and abuse of these techniques?

Yes, there should be a record that would show the details in case of future legal or medical arguments.

10. How will you improve the employment services for people with mental health issues so that they are based on people’s skills and strengths rather than assuming the only jobs they can do are in food, janitorial, back office and landscaping?

Making sure that the employment position is safe for the people with mental health issues and for the general public and potentially opening up potential jobs in the technology sector.

11. There is an epidemic of depression at the moment. Loneliness is a major cause of depression and early death. Self-help support groups reduce loneliness. What steps will you take to reduce the number of people depressed?

Helping to highlight that mental health and depression are common mental health issues and opening up more lines of communication so people would feel more comfortable seeking help.

12. Are you open to sober living and shared recovery housing as a way of increasing affordable housing in your district?

Yes.

13. What are you doing to end homelessness?

I helped start a non-profit called Skid Row Running Club where we train the homeless to run marathons and provide them housing.

14. How do you plan to reduce the stigma and discrimination against mental health consumers in your district?

Hold more townhouses to stress the importance of mental health, bring more funding to mental health programs.

15. Do you have any other positions that will make life better for mental health consumers, clients, survivors and others in recovery?

I believe we can also have more volunteer positions, since homelessness and mental health position tend to benefit from interacting with the public.

16. Do you or anyone you know suffer from depression, anxiety, mood disorders, schizophrenia, addiction or other mental health diagnoses?

I have had several close friends and family members suffer form mental health issues.

17. What is your party affiliation?

Democrat.

18. Who have you received endorsements from?

We are currently working on state and national endorsements.