**Chris Anderson is running for Democratic Central Committee in the 39th Assembly District.**

Thank you for submitting to me these valuable and important questions. I am a person living with mental illness in particular Bipolar Disorder. I've been hospitalized twice in the past ten years for acute mania and am currently the illness is being managed effectively through proper monitoring of medications and monthly talk therapy, I am doing well! Below are my answers to the questions you posed to me and I hope you email me if you have any questions. I am currently up for election for the Democratic County Central Committee for CA's 39th Assembly District. Have a nice day!

Regards,

Chris Anderson

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

CA: More peer services and quality, comprehensive outpatient care are needed today more than locked facilities. We need to be recovery focused and work on long term management for the individual and there is no better way than through peer services. Peer services offers the individual multiple levels of treatment and support to ensure a smoother and longer lasting recovery. Peer support is considered a best practice by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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

CA: I am opposed to increasing the state's ability to conserve homeless people. I know there is initiative in the state legislature to make conservatorship much easier for the mentally ill.

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

CA: If a person is either a grave threat to themselves or threatens others then that person must be restrained from causing harm. In treating the person after restraint a medical doctor should determine whether psych medication is necessary and beneficial to the individual. However, informed consent is a cornerstone of medicine and just because medication would help the individual it is not a reason to force the individual to take psych medications. No. People should not be forced to take psych medications against their will.

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

CA: Jails are the largest mental health facilities in America. It should not be a crime to be have schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, substance abuse disorder or any other serious mental illness. All those arrested must be evaluated by a medical doctor and psychiatrist before entering a jailed facility. Those arrested that have mental health issues must be treated in a clinical facility.

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?

CA: Limited conservatorship should require the doctor of the person's choice and at least one more doctor to sign off. Limited conservatorship should be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure the conservatee is receiving adequate support from the conservator.

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?

CA: Individuals with a developmental disability or mental illness are more likely to be the victims of abuse, violence, harassment and discrimination than the rest of the population. It is vitally necessary that conservatees have a way to report any wrongdoing against them.

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?

CA: Currently there is no Peer Certification program in California that allows peer specialists to bill Medi-Cal. On January 8th, 2020 California State Senator Jim Beall (D-San Jose) introduced bill SB803 that would provide for peer certification and payment by Medi-Cal. I support this effort and will do all I can to make sure that Peer Certification is passed in the state.

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?

CA: Yes peer workers should have knowledge of the many self help support groups in the district in order to be certified. These groups are critical in helping individuals with mental illness or substance use disorders get the support they need to stay of a track to recovery.

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?

CA: Incidents of use of seclusion and restraint are oftentimes chaotic, violent, turbulent, and disordered. These incidents must be recorded and reviewed to ensure that health professionals and staff are not physically or verbally abusing the person with psychiatric issues. The person who was restrained deserves a copy of the incident and this video may be used to file a complaint to the state.

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?

CA: People living with mental health issues have special and unique talents, skills and knowledge because they have had to face much more adversity and challenges associated with their illness. More resources should be dedicated to the Department of Rehabilitation.

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?

CA: We need to ask ourselves why has loneliness and thus depression increased? Consumerism, materialism, rugged individualism, greater divide between the haves and the have nots, social media addiction, and disinformation are the root causes of our general depression in society. We need to make life easier to live, less expensive, more environmentally safe, more affordable and low income housing, universal healthcare and more investment in public education especially at the early years.

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

CA: Of course.

13. What are you doing to end homelessness?

CA: Lifting people out of homelessness requires an array of "wrap around" services. Becoming homeless can be a very traumatic life event that people have a hard time turning around. It has an effect on their mental health, their sense of worth, and their identity. First step is making sure that all homeless are offered services. Those services first involve temporary and/or permanent housing. Second, mental health services should be offered. Third, nutrition and financial assistance. Finally, a care worker should be assigned to each family or individual to ensure that they remain stable for a significant period of time.

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

CA: I believe the best way to reduce stigma is to be carefully honest in discussing mental illness with others. Talk about your own personal struggles and how you have overcome them and are still working through them.

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

CA: Many individuals in mental health or substance use recovery suffer from severe nicotine addiction. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) should be part of all recovery programs and the State should subsidize the sales of products that replace smoking cigarettes.

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

CA: I suffer from Bipolar 1 Disorder with Psychotic Features. I have been hospitalized under a 5150 twice in the past ten years for acute mania and psychosis. Three brothers suffer from Schizophrenia. One brother suffers from Alcoholism and Depression. My mother also suffers from depression and anxiety. As you can see I have a lot of experience coping with mental health issues and I work constantly to help all those suffering with mental illness and other disabilities.

17. What is your party affiliation?

CA: Democratic Party

18. Who have you received endorsements from?

CA: North Valley Democratic Club, Valley Grassroots For Democracy, Hon Assembly Member Luz Rivas (D-North Hollywood).

I serve as an elected Executive Board member for the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley working on Endorsements, Political Action, and ByLaws committees. I also am an Alternate Member of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party and work on the Legislation committee.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Regards,

Chris Anderson AD39