

DRC DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER - NH

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Disability Unscripted: 2020 Candidates on Inclusion & Accessibility **Transcript of Michael Bennett: Concord, NH April 7, 2019** <https://drcnh.org/videos/michael-bennett-video-campaign-inclusion-and-accessibility/>

DRC-NH Staff: One in five Americans have a disability. Nineteen percent of likely voters has a disability. So I'm curious if you could talk about how you've reached out and employed folks with disabilities as a Senator and then how you might do that, if you do have an administration, if you do decide to run?

And then also because you have a you know your background as a superintendent, could you please speak to some of the ways we could strengthen the IDEA? As you know states across the nation are struggling to meet their obligations as far as students with special needs.

Michael Bennett: Yeah, and that's where most of my focus has been in this area. I think the most important thing we could do to strengthen the IDEA would be actually fund it properly which we never have done, so that would go a long way to changing the the outcomes that kids with disabilities have in this country. And for school districts, for schools, and most important for kids and their families the IDEA has mostly been an unfunded mandate since it was passed. We worked very hard when I was superintendent of the Denver public schools to make sure that, as I said earlier to you, that we were pulling kids into classrooms not pushing kids out of those classrooms. And I think that's that's something all over this country we have not done well enough. We need, and I think you know on a range of things, Denver Public Schools is in much better shape today on this set of issues than it was many years ago. As I said to you earlier, there's a reason for that, which is that the parents of the kids with disabilities are the fiercest advocates that I have ever come across in my lifetime.

I believe it's important for these campaigns to all be diverse in every respect including people with disabilities. And as I mentioned to you earlier, there have been times when when we've been, where's Sara? There have been times when we've gone and done campaign events, or other events, more likely to be a campaign event, where people with disabilities have not been able to access the event. People have mentioned it to us and we've corrected that.

Event Host: You guys are making me embarrassed about this house [laughter].

DRC-NH Staff: This is a beautiful house.

MB: This is a beautiful house.

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DRC-NH Staff: But a ramp in the car would help. Have a ramp in the campaign van. [laughter]

MB: Maybe we can work on that this afternoon [laughter] Thank you.

Candidate video fades out to informational slide

DRC-NH Staff Voice Over: Please contact us if you think your voting rights have been violated, or visit our website at drcnh.org to learn more about your voting rights. To support our work protecting the rights of people with disabilities, visit our website at drcnh.org/donate.