

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER - NH

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Disability Unscripted 2020: Samuel Habib Interviews Corky Messner, Republican candidate for Senate

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Corky Messner: How are you doing?

Samuel Habib: Hi, Mr. Messner. Thank you for taking some time for this interview.

CM: You're welcome, thanks for asking me. I'm glad we're doing this.

SH: I'm Samuel Habib. I am 20 years old and I live in Concord.

CM: Hi, Samuel.

SH: Given projected shortfalls of state revenues, many states may be forced to make cuts to programs that support the health, safety, and independence of people with disabilities. What kind of solutions would you propose to ensure that people with disabilities are not disproportionately impacted by these budgetary deficits?

CM: Yeah, I think it's a question of priorities. And, in this case, I think people with disabilities should be taken care of and helped in the programs that assist them, should have a very high priority when it comes to budgets and where we allocate funds.

SH: COVID-19 has threatened to overwhelm the resources of medical providers to a point where doctors may be forced to choose which patients receive treatment and which do not. No one wants to limit medical care for COVID-19 patients, but plans need to be developed in case rationing becomes necessary. Currently, an advisory committee is developing guidance for hospitals. What would you want to see included in this guidance?

CM: Well, yeah, I think first and foremost, the number one thing in the guidance is to make sure there's enough resources to help everybody. It's the question of accessibility of healthcare and everyone ought to be entitled to healthcare, and we ought to make sure that hospitals have enough resources to help everybody, quite frankly. And we saw at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, that that's what President Trump did with the construction of these field hospitals throughout the country. So, there should be adequate financing and adequate resources so that all hospitals can take care of whoever needs help.

SH: I have been included in regular classes since elementary school and that helped prepare me for college. What will you do to help kids with disabilities be included in regular education and college?

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CM: Yeah, I think it's incredibly important. A long time ago, long, long time ago, Samuel, I was involved in starting a school called the Rise School and it's sort of a preschool for Down Syndrome people. And the research around that was that if you have a school where you got children with disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, and they're in school with kids who do not have disabilities, that all the children do better. The children with disabilities and the children without disabilities end up doing better. So, I think it's very important that we make sure that young people with disabilities are able to attend regular schools because in my opinion, it helps everybody. It helps the people with disabilities and the people without disabilities.

SH: Do you think that the ADA and IDEA are being properly enforced in New Hampshire and nationally? And if not, what will you do to make sure that these laws are actually followed and enforced?

CM: Yeah, I think there's a lot of inconsistency throughout the state and the country on the enforceability of how those laws are being enforced. And like many of the laws we have, I think the answer is to simplify them, make sure that there's adequate oversight and enforcement procedures, so that schools, and businesses, and other retail establishment are complying with the ADA laws to ensure that everyone can patronize them.

SH: One in five Americans, including 19% of likely voters experience a disability. What will you do to help more people with disabilities get jobs?

CM: I think it's really, really important that as a society, we make sure that everyone has the opportunity to work, and to have the dignity of a good job. And we need to encourage all kinds of businesses, every type of business to look at and hire people with disabilities. I was involved in some other organizations that make it a point to hire people with disabilities and we ought to encourage that. I'm not someone who is big on government imposing requirements, but I think the free market can help that, and I think we can incentivize the free market to hire people with disabilities by providing various kinds of tax incentives.

SH: What efforts are you making to reach out and employ people with disabilities in your campaign and your staff?

CM: Yeah, well, listen, we have a pretty small staff. We will talk to anybody who wants to come to work and help us, and volunteers who want to help us. It's a small staff and it's not like we're out hiring many people at all anyway. But we'll talk to anyone who wants to volunteer and help.

SH: What steps would you take to increase the availability of accessible housing for people with disabilities?

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CM: Yeah, again, I think that the best solution to that is to provide incentives to housing providers to make sure that by providing housing, that's accessible to those with disability, that there are certain tax incentives and other kinds of incentives for the market to address that situation.

SH: If accessible voting equipment was purchased with federal funding, it cannot be used in local or municipal elections. What steps would you take so that accessible voting equipment is available in every New Hampshire election, including local elections?

CM: Yeah, I think to the extent that there's any kind of restriction on that, that sounds silly to me. And I would propose legislation to eliminate any of those kinds of restrictions. And in addition to the extent necessary, provide grants to municipalities and states so they can buy enough equipment so everyone can vote.

SH: Those are all the questions I have for you. Thank you so much for taking time to do this interview.

CM: Thank you so much and if you have any other questions, just let me know. And God bless you.