QUESTIONS TO ASK CANDIDATES

Use the following five questions to ask candidates about key recovery issues.

1. An estimated 22.7 million Americans (8.6 percent) need treatment for a problem related to drugs or alcohol. Untreated addiction, and the accompanying negative stigma, often leads to other problems and illnesses such as heart disease, lower work productivity, overcrowded jails, and developmental damage to the addicted person’s children. Yet, there continues to be a large “treatment gap” with only 2.5 million people (0.9 percent) receiving treatment at a specialty facility. If elected, will you take action to address stigma surrounding addiction, and increase access to addiction treatment and recovery services to all that need them?

2. The war on drugs has proven that despite spending billions per year to fight it, drug use has not decreased. With an explosion in prison populations, continued substance abuse in vulnerable populations, and a spike in opioid use and overdoses, the electorate is pushing for a new approach that puts an emphasis on treatment and alternatives to jail. Do you agree with this statement and why? Do you support treating addiction comprehensively as a public health issue and not a criminal justice issue?

3. Many in long-term recovery have experienced insurance discrimination, having been denied any form of continued care that would help manage and treat their chronic illness. While the Affordable Care Act and past parity legislation has lessened this problem, discrimination remains prevalent in the insurance market. What would you do to ensure compliance with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act? Do you support transparency from insurance providers about addiction treatment?

4. Many people who are in jails and prisons struggle with addiction. Despite the fact that there is effective treatment and community-based recovery for addiction that reduces recidivism and keeps people out of costly jails and prisons, many don’t receive any treatment for their addiction while incarcerated or after they return to their families and community. Do you support strengthening access to addiction treatment and recovery support services for people who are or have recently been incarcerated? Do you agree with providing treatment and recovery support as an alternative to incarceration?

5. Millions of individuals in long term recovery from addiction have been convicted of low level drug offenses, making it difficult to receive education services, find employment, and access housing. Too often this strain can lead to relapses back into active addiction, and families and communities suffer the emotional and economic costs. Do you support criminal justice reform in this area and lowering barriers to reintegrate into society, as it relates to substance use disorders and recovery?

For more information on what you can do to get involved, go to www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org or email: info@facesandvoicesofrecovery.org