



2026 Candidate Forum

Statement on Equitable Participation and Non-Partisanship

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is pleased to host the 2026 Candidate Forum, providing an opportunity for candidates seeking statewide office to speak directly with individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, caregivers, and advocates. The Council is committed to ensuring that this forum is conducted in a manner that is fair, transparent, inclusive, and fully compliant with all applicable federal and state requirements governing the use of public funds in an election year.

The Candidate Forum will adhere to the following guidelines:

Offices and Candidates Invited

All candidates who are qualified to appear on the ballot and are actively competing for the following statewide and federal offices are invited to participate in the forum:

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Secretary of State
- Insurance Commissioner
- Attorney General
- Labor Commissioner
- State Superintendent of Schools
- United States Senator for Georgia

No candidate for a listed office will be excluded from the invitation. Participation is voluntary; any candidate who chooses not to participate will not be represented at the forum.

Equal Communications and Preparation Materials

The Council is committed to ensuring that every invited candidate receives identical information and preparation support. Specifically:

- All invitations will be issued simultaneously by email to each candidate or their authorized campaign representative.
- Every candidate will receive the same written materials describing the forum's format, logistics, accessibility accommodations, and ground rules.
- Background information about the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities and the policy priorities of the disability community will be provided to all candidates at the same time.
- No candidate or campaign will receive advance notice of specific questions or any other preparatory advantages that have not been shared equally with all participants.

Equal Treatment and Uniform Questioning

The forum will be structured to ensure that all participating candidates are treated with respect and are given an equal opportunity to address the audience. The following standards will be strictly observed:

- Each candidate will be asked the same questions or similar questions tailored to the specific office sought.
- Each candidate will be allotted equal time for remarks.
- The order in which candidates speak will be determined by a random draw, and will be disclosed to all participants in advance.
- No candidate will be given preferential introductions, or prominence in the program or printed materials over another.

Neutral Moderation and Questions

The forum will be moderated by a GCDD staff person and Council member. Questions will be asked by self-advocates from across the state. They will:

- Facilitate the event in a neutral manner, refraining from expressing or implying any personal, organizational, or political preference for any candidate or party.
- Apply time limits and procedural rules uniformly to all candidates.
- Redirect or respectfully interrupt any candidate whose response exceeds the allotted time, applying the same standard to every participant.
- Frame questions in neutral, policy-focused language that does not favor any political viewpoint, party platform, or ideology.

Non-Endorsement Policy

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities does not endorse, support, or oppose any candidate, political party, or partisan political organization. This forum is convened solely for the purpose of educating the disability community about candidates' positions on issues affecting individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

The Council will clearly state this non-partisan status in all event materials, announcements, and communications.

Federal Funds and Compliance with Federal Regulations

As a recipient of federal financial assistance, GCDD will ensure that:

- Federal award funds will not be used to pay for any forum-related costs that constitute campaign activity, partisan advocacy, or any other expenditure that could be deemed an attempt to influence an election outcome.
- Any forum costs charged to GCDD's federal award will meet the allowability requirements established under 2 CFR §§ 200.403–200.405, including the requirements that costs be necessary and reasonable, allocable to the federal award, consistent with applicable laws and regulations, and adequately documented.