Three of the four major Nevada governor candidates took the stage at a Catholic church parish hall on Tuesday night, answering for a standing room-only crowd questions about their positions on issues ranging from the expansion of Medicaid to their ideas for increasing paratransit services and tackling homelessness.

Democratic Clark County Commissioners Chris Giunchigliani and Steve Sisolak, along with Republican Treasurer Dan Schwartz, participated in the forum hosted by Nevadans for the Common Good. The group said they invited Republican primary frontrunner and Attorney General Adam Laxalt but it wasn’t clear why he didn’t attend.

The group, comprised of dozens of faith-based charities and churches, distributed scorecards to audience members to take notes on how candidates answered the questions. At the end of the forum, audience members were asked to stand if they were willing to share what they learned with their friends and vote in the primaries.

Volunteers from the group made short presentations during the first half of the gathering, sharing personal stories they’d gathered from the community that illustrated the way the Medicaid expansion had helped families, how the lack of affordable housing forced people to live paycheck to paycheck and how spotty public transportation services left some with hours-long commutes or forced people with disabilities to show up late to doctor appointments.

Candidates were asked the same questions about whether they support the priority issues of Nevadans for the Common Good.

Here are some of the candidates’ responses:
**Will you ensure that Medicaid expansion is maintained?**
Candidates were asked whether they supported Gov. Brian Sandoval’s decision to opt Nevada in to Medicaid for an expanded population that included single childless adults.

“Health care is a right and not a privilege,” said Giunchigliani. “We need to protect the 200,000 Nevadans who are receiving that and I will fight Trump and anybody trying to roll back the [Affordable Care Act]. We need to make sure doctors can accept Medicaid and we have one of the lowest reimbursement rates in the United States and I plan on raising that pay so doctors will take your insurance.”

She pointed out that as a member of the Assembly, she worked to ensure that medical care included mental health.

“I believe in universal health care. We need to move toward that and I plan on doing that as governor,” she said.

Schwartz said he would maintain the Medicaid expansion if elected.

“The real issue is who’s going to pay for it,” he said. “Obamacare failed because the administration didn’t really provide for a means to pay for it so the health insurance companies defaulted, the healthy people said no, the sick people said yes.”

Sisolak said he “will absolutely work to maintain the Medicaid expansion.”

“We should be ashamed of ourselves … that you can’t get health care,” he said. “It should not be predicated on your bank balance or your ZIP code. It should be available everywhere.”

**Will you ensure that room tax revenues generated by Initiative Petition 1 and retail taxes on the sale of marijuana are used to supplement the general fund expenditures on public education?**

The question comes as education advocates argue that revenue from ballot measures approved in 2009 and 2016 isn’t going wholly to education in contravention of voters’ wishes.

“I’m absolutely committed to making sure initiative tax goes to where it was supposed to go which is schools and not to the general fund,” Giunchigliani said. “The pot tax needs to come out of rainy day and go where it was. No more supplanting — this is all meant to be supplemental and they’re constantly taking it and putting it someplace else.”

Schwartz confirmed that he would ensure marijuana and IP1 money goes back to schools. He also panned the plan to use hotel tax revenue to build the Raiders stadium — an arrangement NCG lobbied against in a 2016 special session.

“I will ask one of my colleagues — why are we spending $750 million to build a football stadium?” he said.

Sisolak declared that “public education is grossly underfunded in the state of Nevada.”

“With IP1, what happens is they put money in with their left hand and took it out with their right hand so no more money went to education,” he said. “It was not supplemental, it was supplanted, which was not the intention. We need to do more to increase the revenue available.”
He defended the Raiders stadium against the other candidates’ criticisms, saying it — along with the convention center expansion — will create 45,000 jobs and offer people the dignity of work. He also said it will bring in $35 million in tax revenue each year that could benefit schools and other public projects.

“It’s a win-win for everybody that’s involved,” he said.

**Are you committed to working with NCG as we move forward to improve transportation services?**

Giunchigliani, who is on the board of the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, said the agency just had an audit done that should show what’s working and what isn’t working.

“We have to initiate coordination better with our nonprofits,” she said about issues with paratransit for people with disabilities. “We actually just initiated a program to see if Lyft might be an alternative to be able to help individuals. That pilot is going quite well.”

She said it’s important to get more creative about public transportation solutions because competition from ridesharing services and free buses is driving down the revenue public buses are getting from traditional fares.

Schwartz said “of course” he’s willing to work on the transportation issue. But he again raised the question of how the state would pay for improvements.

“We as a state are broke,” he said. “Does that mean we can’t pay our debts? No. But there’s no room in there for expansion. And if we’re going to do all these things … we’re going to have to raise taxes. We’re going to have to get the money back from the stadium.”

Schwartz said he’s committed not to impose an income or corporate tax, but said the Nevada gaming industry has the lowest tax rates for casinos of any other jurisdictions in the country. Sisolak said the RTC needs to focus on developing its business on the Las Vegas Strip so it has enough money to better serve residential areas.

**What actions will you take to alleviate the bottleneck that happens when people who are 30 percent or below the median income are not able to find affordable housing?**

Giunchigliani said the state needs to streamline low income housing building process because many developers are not willing to undertake such projects. She also wants to see “habitability” laws that require a baseline of service — such as hot water — for a home to be rentable.

Schwartz said the state could issue bonds for low-income housing projects, “but ultimately the state has to decide — are we our brother’s keeper? Are we going to allocate funds that are going to a football stadium, going to the casinos, for this? My answer is yes.”

He also exhorted audience members to push their state legislators to support affordable housing developments.

Sisolak said Southern Nevada needs to acquire more federally managed Bureau of Land Management land to offer to developers at a reduced price, which would allow them to develop more affordable housing.