

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

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Party Affiliation: Democrat

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Questions for 2024 Candidates for State Office in North Carolina

1. The most rapid period of brain development happens in the first five years of life, laying the foundation for all future learning, health, and success in school and life. What are your views on the needs of young children (prenatal to age 5) and what steps would you take to address these needs?

It is vital that all kids have access to having all their needs met at an age appropriate developmental level that supports their wellness in healthy family systems. Removing systemic barriers to equal access for all children and families is a core aspect of my dream for Charlotte and the state.

2. Every county in North Carolina is considered a "child care desert" with not enough supply to meet the demand. When parents do find child care, the average cost is nearly \$10,000/year, which is higher than the cost of public college tuition. What steps would you take to ensure that families have access to high-quality and affordable early learning programs for their children?

I would love to see subsidies that support early childhood education to make it affordable and accessible for all families.

3. Currently, child care teachers in North Carolina earn an average of \$14/hour, less than most retail or service workers. Since 2021, federally-funded Child Care Compensation Grants have provided higher wages and bonuses to more than 40,000 North Carolina early educators, but that funding has expired. This summer, the NC General Assembly appropriated funds to extend the grants for a short time, while also recognizing the need to explore long-term solutions to attract and retain a qualified early childhood workforce. What steps would you take to stabilize and sustain North Carolina's early education system and child care workforce as we approach the end of Compensation Grant funding?

I would love to see subsidies to stabilize and sustain NC's early education system and workforce.

4. Working parents depend on child care, and businesses in nearly every sector have identified child care as a critical factor in their workforce challenges. A new study from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that insufficient child care is costing North Carolina about \$5.65 billion each year. What are your views on how the issues facing our state's child care system impact the state's economy? What specific steps would you take to ensure that our child care system can keep up with the demand as more working families need child care?

Expand early childcare facilities and provide subsidies and training for workforce development to meet the needs of expanding current facilities.

5. North Carolina currently spends approximately 1% of the annual state budget on early childhood programs, including Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and Child Care Subsidy Assistance. Nearly all early childhood programs in every county of the state have waiting lists and only serve a fraction of eligible children and families. What are your goals for overall early childhood funding and/or what types of early childhood programs would you support making an investment in at the state level?

I would support increased public funding for early childhood education with a particular interest in equitable access. What are you proposing? I'd love to hear about it.

6. If elected, what would be your top 5 priorities for 2025?

Reproductive Justice: Everyone deserves affordable healthcare, including access to reproductive health services.

Small Businesses: Small businesses are crucial to our communities, and I am committed to supporting their growth and success.

Protecting the Environment: We must take urgent action to reduce our carbon footprint and protect our natural resources.

Education: Every student deserves equal opportunities to succeed through quality education.

Comprehensive Community Safety: We must promote mental health and wellness and build strong, resilient communities for safe and healthy living.