

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Maurice (Mo) Green

District or Office: State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Retired (former Executive Director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Superintendent of Guilford County Schools and General Counsel/Deputy Superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools)

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?

In considering the needs of young children (prenatal to age 5) and given the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the availability of quality child care in our communities, access to excellent prekindergarten and effective transition programs to kindergarten are critical. Reproductive healthcare is also important for this group. While not completely in the direct purview of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the issue of childcare is real and relevant to the work we do once children enter public schools. North Carolina is considered a child care desert and over 60% of parents of infants and toddlers are working. North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation recently reported that 1 in 4 North Carolina Children live in child care deserts. I would work closely with the Birth through Third Grade (B-3) Interagency Council which was established in 2017 to seek innovative solutions.

I would work on excellent pre-kindergarten programming and transition to kindergarten to ensure that the early learning experiences meet children where they are, prepare them for their greatest learning potential, and above all, make every child feel welcome and safe.

I will also advocate for all women having access to reproductive healthcare. Given my potential role as State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I would support efforts to have students be taught comprehensive, medically-accurate, comprehensive health education to North Carolina schools in middle and high schools.

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?

Child care that is accessible and affordable is critical for working families. It is also critical for high-quality early learning, as much of a child's development occurs in the early years. It creates a foundation on which lifelong learning can occur.

North Carolina is considered a child care desert and over 60% of parents of infants and toddlers are working. The North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation recently reported that one in four North Carolina children live in child care deserts. I would work closely with the Birth through Third Grade (B-3) Interagency Council, which was established in 2017 to seek innovative solutions and brings together the NC Department of Health and Human Services with the Department of Public Instruction to improve early childhood outcomes.

I will also continue to listen and learn about the specific needs to determine next steps.

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?

As the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I would be the chief advocate for public schools and for public school educators. I would also advocate on behalf of individuals in the early childhood workforce. I would work closely with the NC General Assembly and Governor to advocate that child care teachers are paid a fair wage. They are an essential part of our education system. I will also continue to listen and learn about the specific needs to determine next steps.

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?

Child care is essential for the economy because it helps children, first of all, but it also helps families and businesses. Child care is a critical part of our economy because it enables parents to participate in the workforce.

As State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I would work closely with the Birth through Third Grade (B-3) Interagency Council, which was established in 2017, to seek innovative solutions to improve the child care system. I would also work closely with the North Carolina General Assembly and the Governor to lift up the issues facing North Carolina's child care system and effects on the economy.

I will also continue to listen and learn about the specific needs to determine next steps.

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?

Across the board, North Carolina's system of public education is being woefully underfunded, including early childhood programs. In various measures, North Carolina ranks at or near the bottom among the states in funding provided for public education. Our state is, sadly, already 48th in the nation in funding for public education. A court ordered report found that billions of dollars are due to the North Carolina public school system. Those funds have not been provided. Rather, the General Assembly has appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars and will appropriate billions of taxpayer dollars to an expanded private school voucher program for the wealthiest families in North Carolina. Those funds should be going to the public school system, including our early childhood education system.

Similarly, child care educators in North Carolina are being woefully underpaid. In various measures, North Carolina ranks towards the bottom among the states in teacher compensation. The result is substantial vacancies. Our children deserve better. I will advocate to strengthen the pipeline of educators. In addition, I will advocate to increase their compensation to value their work accordingly and ensure we retain our talent.

A recent report from the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that our state loses \$5.65 billion per year due to insufficient child care in North Carolina. Instead of adequately investing our resources in early childhood education, North Carolina is losing money due to inadequate policy decisions.

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

My top five priorities for 2025 for the North Carolina public school system in general, over the next four years, are: advocating for substantial increases in funding for the public education system in general; advocating for substantial increases in base pay for all public school educators, excluding me; deploying limited resources to support lower performing schools and school systems while effectively implementing policies and strategies that will improve the academic achievement for all students (e.g., the science of reading, social studies standards); providing guidance and support on ensuring safe and secure learning environments; and engaging parents and communities in making necessary reforms and improvements in our public schools while also celebrating the good in them.

Because I will always continue to listen and learn about the needs of local schools and districts and NC DPI, these priorities may change.