

## 2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Reece Pyrtle

District or Office: NC House District 65

Party Affiliation: Republican

Current Occupation: Legislator, Retired - Police Chief (City of Eden)

### 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?**

The first five years of a child's life are indeed crucial for their development, and it's important that we support parents in nurturing our youngest citizens. I believe that families should be empowered to make the best decisions for their children. To address the needs of young children, I would advocate for policies that support family stability, such as expanding access to parental resources, promoting strong family values, and ensuring that parents have the tools they need to provide a safe and loving environment. I also support programs that provide parents with access to early childhood education resources, so they can be active participants in their child's early learning and development.

**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?**

The lack of affordable and accessible child care is a significant issue that affects families across North Carolina. I believe in creating a competitive marketplace for child care services, which can drive down costs and improve quality. This could be achieved by reducing unnecessary regulations that burden child care providers, offering tax incentives for businesses that provide child care support to their employees, and exploring public-private partnerships that can expand access to high-quality early learning programs. Additionally, I would support expanding eligibility for child care subsidies to assist working families who are struggling with the high costs.

**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?**

Our child care workforce is essential, and we must find sustainable ways to ensure that these educators are fairly compensated. Rather than relying solely on temporary federal grants, I would advocate for a more market-driven approach. This includes exploring state-level tax credits or incentives for child care providers who invest in their workforce, as well as encouraging professional development opportunities that can lead to higher wages. By fostering a competitive and supportive environment for child care providers, we can ensure that they are able to retain qualified staff and continue offering quality care to our children.

**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?**

The challenges within our child care system have a direct impact on North Carolina's economy, particularly as they affect workforce participation and productivity. To address this, I would support initiatives that encourage private sector involvement in child care solutions. For example, offering tax credits to businesses that provide on-site child care or child care assistance to their employees can help meet the demand while also benefiting our economy. Additionally, by fostering a business-friendly environment, we can attract more child care providers to enter the market, increasing competition and availability, which in turn helps drive down costs for families.

***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?***

Investing in early childhood programs is an investment in the future of our state. While it's important to be fiscally responsible, I believe that targeted investments in programs like Smart Start and NC Pre-K can yield significant long-term benefits. My goal would be to ensure that any state funding is used efficiently and effectively, with a focus on expanding access to those who need it most. I would also support innovative programs that leverage private sector partnerships to maximize the impact of state dollars, ensuring that we get the best return on our investment in early childhood education.

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

1. Strengthening Infrastructure: Improving and maintaining critical infrastructure, particularly in transportation, to support growth and safety in our communities.
2. Economic Growth and Job Creation: Promoting a pro-business environment that fosters economic growth, attracts new businesses to our state, and supports small business development.
3. Education Reform: Advocating for school choice and ensuring that all students have access to quality education, whether it's public, public charter, private, or homeschool.
4. Fiscal Responsibility: Ensuring that the state budget is balanced, with a focus on reducing unnecessary spending and lowering taxes to keep more money in the pockets of hardworking North Carolinians.
5. Public Safety: Supporting our law enforcement and first responders, ensuring they have the resources needed to keep our communities safe.