

## 2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Tina Royal

District or Office: NC Senate District 30

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Retired NC Department of Adult Correction Probation/Parole Officer

### 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?**

Supporting young children, particularly from prenatal to age five, is crucial because this period is foundational for a child's development. Here's how I view their needs and steps that could be taken to address them. Addressing the needs requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that involves healthcare, education, social services, and economic support. Investing in early childhood development yields significant returns in terms of individual well-being and societal outcomes, making it one of the most impactful areas for public policy

**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?**

Running for NC Senate District 30, there are several steps I would advocate for to ensure that families have access to high-quality and affordable early learning programs for their children. Advocate for increased state funding for early childhood education programs, such as NC Pre-K, which provides high-quality pre-kindergarten education to eligible four-year-olds. Introduce or support legislation that offers financial incentives, grants, and subsidies to childcare providers to maintain and enhance program quality. Advocate for the expansion of the Child Care Subsidy Program, which helps low-income families afford childcare. Work towards implementing a universal pre-K program in North Carolina, making high-quality early education available to all children, regardless of family income. By taking these steps, we can create a system in NC Senate District 30 where all families have access to affordable, high-quality early learning programs. This will not only benefit individual children and families but will also contribute to the long-term prosperity and well-being of our community.

**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 an NC Senate candidate, I recognize the critical importance of stabilizing and sustaining North Carolina's early education system and childcare workforce, especially as we approach the end of Compensation Grant funding. Push for the creation of a permanent, dedicated funding stream for early childhood education and childcare. This could be achieved through state budget allocations or by establishing a specific fund supported by tax revenues or public-private partnerships. Propose legislation that provides ongoing wage supplements or tax credits for early childhood educators. These initiatives would help offset the loss of Compensation Grants and support the retention of skilled workers in the field. Work to expand access to professional development and career advancement opportunities for early childhood educators. This includes scholarships, tuition assistance, and mentorship programs that encourage continued education and skill development. By implementing certain steps, we can create a more resilient early education system in North Carolina that supports both families and the

childcare workforce, even as temporary funding sources phase out. My focus would be on long-term solutions that ensure the stability and growth of this vital sector.

**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?**

By integrating childcare solutions into the workplace, businesses can reduce absenteeism, improve employee satisfaction, and support the overall economic health of the state. Advocate for the expansion of universal pre-K programs across North Carolina. This initiative could be gradually rolled out, focusing first on communities with the highest need, and incorporating a mix of public and private providers. As a candidate for NC Senate, it's essential to recognize that the issues facing our state's childcare system are intricately linked to the broader economy. Here's how the current challenges impact North Carolina's economy and specific steps that can be taken to ensure our childcare system keeps up with growing demand: By addressing the challenges facing North Carolina's childcare system, we can unlock significant economic benefits. Ensuring that our childcare system can keep up with demand will require strategic investments, innovative solutions, and a commitment to supporting both families and childcare providers. These actions will not only strengthen our economy today but also build a more prosperous future for our state.

**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?**

As a candidate for the NC Senate, my goals for overall early childhood funding focus on ensuring that every child in North Carolina has access to high-quality early learning opportunities. I believe that investing in early childhood programs is one of the most impactful ways to support the long-term success of our children and the overall prosperity of our state. Here are my specific goals and the types of programs I would support at the state level. Advocate for sustainable and predictable funding sources for early childhood programs, reducing reliance on temporary grants and ensuring long-term program stability. Direct funds to the communities and populations with the greatest need, including low-income families, rural areas, and historically underserved communities. Support the expansion of universal pre-K across North Carolina, making it available to all four-year-olds, regardless of family income. This could be achieved through a phased approach, starting with the most underserved areas. Increase funding for the Child Care Subsidy Program to make childcare more affordable for low- and middle-income families. Adjust eligibility thresholds and subsidy amounts to better reflect the cost of living and the true cost of quality childcare. My overarching goal is to ensure that North Carolina's early childhood system is robust, equitable, and sustainable. By making targeted investments in these programs, we can provide every child with the opportunity to succeed, support working families, and lay the foundation for a prosperous future for our state.

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

- Strengthen public schools/education
- Expanding access to affordable healthcare
- Job creation and economic development
- Advancement of social and racial justices
- Reproductive rights

These priorities reflect a commitment to building a stronger, more equitable, and prosperous North Carolina. As an NC Senate candidate, I would work tirelessly to address these critical issues and improve the lives of all residents across the state.