

## 2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Susan Sawin

District or Office: NC House District 1

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Bookseller/Business Owner

### 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 needs of young children are critical to supporting healthy communities. The needs of young children must be addressed in all aspects of the community as well. More robust funding and staffing for County Social Services departments, community college training programs for teachers and child care subsidies should be prioritized by the legislature. We also need to prioritize access to affordable healthcare - economically through insurance subsidies and geographically by addressing provider shortages, especially in rural areas. Access to mental health and substance abuse programs will strengthen families and improve the lives of young children. Affordable housing is a critical need and must be dealt with at the state level. More at Four and other PreK programs should be expanded so that all children in NC can go to PreK. Teachers' salaries and benefits are also a part of the solution. Teachers' salaries must be raised and more funding given for adequate teachers assistants, counselors and school based social workers.

**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?**

Subsidies to families and tax incentives and low interest loans to operators are the short term priorities. In the long term, we must develop, fund, and execute a long term plan to make quality, affordable childcare options available for all NC 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?**

The Child Care Compensation Grants should be extended and expanded for as long as it takes to develop and fund long term solutions to our childcare crisis.

**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?**

I am a small business owner and I raised 4 children as a single mom. I know our childcare system must be a top priority if our economy is to thrive and grow. I outlined steps I think are necessary in response to Q 1.

**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?**

All of the existing programs need to be expanded and maintained until the infrastructure (operators, educators, facilities) can be developed for private operators to be able to operate sufficient quality options in each community. I think the issue is important enough for the creation of a state level task force to study the alternatives North Carolina has to solve this critical crisis.

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

Fully Fund Public Schools.

Modernize labor laws and raise the minimum wage.

Address critical health care shortages - including community based mental health and substance abuse programs.

Bring insurance rates and drug prices down

Protect Women's Rights