

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Susan (Susie) Scott

District or Office: NC House District 70

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Volunteer

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?

Young children are at a crucial period in their physical, mental, and emotional development. They must have access to nutritious food and healthcare. To be prepared for kindergarten and subsequent elementary school classes, they also need to play and learn in a caring, supportive, and safe environment that bolsters their educational and social skills. I would work to invest more in early childhood education programs and provide long-term funding to reduce the waiting lists for high quality childcare.

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 fully fund the Leandro Plan which includes additional funding for high-quality pre-kindergarten programs throughout the state. I would also include permanent funding for childcare stabilization grants so that families across the state will have access to affordable childcare.

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?

Providing long-term funding for raising the minimum and average subsidy rates would increase the availability of child care programs in our state. We also need to expand our investment in Smart Start and Pre-K. My county is fortunate to participate in the WAGE\$ program, and I would like to see that expanded to all counties across the state.

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?

Our economy suffers when working families do not have access to quality childcare. As stated before, I would fully fund the Leandro Plan and make sure that there's permanent funding for childcare stabilization grants. We should also expand the WAGE\$ program to all counties across the 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?

My goal is to ensure that families across the state have access to affordable, high-quality early childcare education. We need to expand our support for early childhood programs such as Smart Start, NC Pre-K, Child Care Subsidy Assistance, and the WAGE\$ program. This would support both public and private childcare providers.

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

Education, including early childhood education, has always been one of my top priorities. Another priority is ensuring that our citizens have access to affordable healthcare. I also support reproductive freedom, including access to birth control, IVF, and abortion care because only you should be able to determine when and how you start a family. We must ensure that everyone in our state has access to safe drinking water and clean air. Finally, I believe that all children should be able to attend school without the fear of gun violence.