

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

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District or Office: NC House District 105

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Director at Non Profit

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?

Starting at the prenatal period, expectant mothers need access to healthcare, including Medicaid, to address maternal health issues and keep their baby healthy. I support bills like the state and federal Omnibus that improve care for moms in the pre- and postnatal periods.

After a child is born, they need access to food, shelter, health care, and everything that aids their personal and emotional development. I believe in supporting parents through anti-poverty programs like WIC and CHIP so that both mother and child are healthy.

Strengthening our child care system helps bridge the gap between infancy and Pre-K/Kindergarten, but we also have a responsibility to support parents in nurturing children at home.

Finally, Universal Pre-K would be a boon to parents and children alike. The NCGA should evaluate and consider these and other proposals and policies to address the health of children and young parents holistically.

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 State of North Carolina hasn't raised the minimum wage for almost two decades; that affects the ability of parents to afford child care. Additionally, paying child care workers equitably and fairly is an important part of keeping the system healthy, and a low state minimum wage has helped depress these wages

We should also consider programs and proposals that encourage more students to major in early childhood education - at 2 and 4 year institutions - to address staffing shortages.

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?

North Carolina is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on "opportunity scholarships" that undermine public education; one place this money could be better spent is in child care scholarships that help young children access care while supporting our child care system.

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?

Access to child care gives working parents the ability to participate in the workforce, become small business owners and employers, and help build our economy. I support removing these barriers - which disproportionately affect women - by supporting our child care system.

Additionally, child care credits, tax deductions, and state funding are all necessary to make sure we have a system that works for parents and children alike.

Finally, incentivizing businesses to support child care for employees is another conversation worth having.

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?

Education is the key. I support expanding programs like Smart Start, child care tax credits and universal Pre-K that help give children the tools they need to succeed while also empowering women and parents to participate in the workforce.

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

My top priorities in 2025 include protecting reproductive rights that allow women to have healthy pregnancies; funding a strong public education system starting in Pre-K; protecting and strengthening our democratic institutions with a focus on nonpartisan redistricting; protecting families and children from gun violence; and working for my constituents in House District 105.