

2022 North Carolina General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Maria Cervania

District: House District 41

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Wake County Commissioner

1. What are your views on the needs of young children (prenatal to age 5) and what specific steps would you take to address these needs?

A high-quality early education foundation is vital for a continuum of success in school and life. If elected to the NC General Assembly, I would:

- Adopt a First 1,000 Days approach towards the well-being of women and children since the first 1,000 days from pregnancy to age two offer a crucial window of opportunity to create brighter, healthier futures.
- Build out the NC Pre-K Program to include eligible 3-year-olds by increasing the number of slots, and per-slot funding from the state.
- Develop a new funding system to improve subsidy reimbursement rates for childcare providers, increase teachers' wages, and eliminate families' waiting lists.
- Ramp-up early childhood programs will help children and families get the services they need as early as possible, preventing more severe developmental delays for children and more costly interventions later in school.
- Reform pay compensation, recruitment, education, and retention for the early childhood educator workforce.

2. What steps would you take to ensure that children birth to age five have access to high-quality and affordable early learning programs?

I would follow the recommendations of the Leandro Plan with some expansions:

- Expanding the NC Pre-K program to make high-quality, full-year services available to all eligible three-year-old children
- Eliminating the wait list for child care subsidy
- Expanding Family Connects nurse home visit program (with all visits happening within the ages of birth - 1 year of age)
- Expanding the NC Infant Toddler Program for students with disabilities (also with initial assessment visits happening within the ages of birth - 1 year of age)
- Expanding funding for Smart Start

3. 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 the federal child care relief funding?

The Wake County Board of Commissioners has been the stopgap for the inadequate state funding provided by the NCGA. It is a major factor in the risk of stabilization and sustainability to fully support our children from birth through their transition into school. As we have done in Wake County, the state must fund Smart Start and NC Pre-K starting at age 3 throughout North Carolina.

I advocated and passed a budget for Wake Smart Start and NC Pre-K educators to pay a living wage, and have health insurance and other benefits. We must do the same at the state level. With the challenges that we already face with staffing, we hope that providing a respectable wage and benefits will attract and retain employees. We also need to hire and retain support staff such as school nurses, social workers, counselors, and teacher assistants to help meet young learners' social, emotional, and academic development needs.

4. What are your views on how to provide all children with access to a sound, basic education beginning in early childhood?

We must provide "an equitable, quality public education for every child" in North Carolina. As a Wake County Commissioner, when asked to stand with educators and meet the needs of our students with a state budget that invests in expanding student support, compensating educators fairly, and funding capital improvement, I wholeheartedly voted for the resolution. It is vital that the state fulfills its constitutional duty to provide every child access to sound basic education and fully fund our public schools from early childhood to higher education.