

## 2022 North Carolina General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

**Name:** Jay J. Chaudhuri

**District:** Senate District 15

**Party Affiliation:** Democrat

**Current Occupation:** State Senator; attorney

### **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?**

I believe the single best return on investment for government is investing early childhood education. It's not a red state issue or blue state issue. It's simply in the best interest of our children, our state, and our country. As discussed below, we need to give children a healthy beginning, support families, expand access to high-quality and affordable child care, and better compensate our early childhood educators.

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

As a parent, I firmly believe the science that a child's brain grows faster between zero and three than at another time in life. That's why our children deserve a strong physical and mental health foundation to develop. We can do so by making sure families have access to health care by closing the Medicaid gap and expanding eligibility for early intervention services to include infants and toddlers at risk for developmental delays. In addition, as discussed below, we need expand access to high-quality and affordable child care and better compensate our early childhood educators.

### **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 pandemic has laid bare the importance of early childhood education and care. Today, parents and businesses lose about \$2.9 billion from inadequate early childhood care and education. Today, early childhood teachers are paid an average of \$10.50/hour with 50 percent receiving some kind of assistance. That's why we have to pass legislation similar to Enhance Early Childhood Workforce Act (House Bill 882) that requires education certificates for early childhood teachers and paid private childcare centers if they had salary schedule based on education. In the alternative, the General Assembly might consider establishing a statewide salary supplement program for early educators with associate degrees.

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

I believe the General Assembly has failed to meet its state constitutional obligation to provide every child with a "sound, basic education." In Wake County alone, the comprehensive remedial plan under Leandro would more than triple the funding for North Carolina Pre-K, Smart Start, and North Carolina Infant Toddler Programs by Fiscal Year 2028. It would add more than 3,000 North Carolina Pre-K slots and serve more than 8,500 infant toddlers.