

2022 North Carolina General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Sarah Crawford

District: House District 66

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: CEO, Tammy Lynn Center for
Developmental Disabilities

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?

We must invest in early childhood education. Studies have shown that access to pre-school and early childhood services improves educational outcomes for our children. For children with special needs, we know that early intervention is key in supporting developmental milestones and providing parents with the tools they need to best support their children. Investments must include: supporting and increasing the early childhood educator pipeline, expanding Smart Start to increase quality and access to services, and providing universal pre-school services and expanding NC-PreK.

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

We must ensure that there is affordable access to high quality child care and pre-school programs. This includes ensuring that we have a strong pipeline of early childhood educators, attracting and retaining talent by treating these educators like the professionals they are with increased pay and professional development opportunities. Additionally, we need to expand access for NC-PreK to ensure that all at-risk four year olds across the state can be enrolled in an early learning program. We must prioritize our high poverty communities and adjust resources to ensure that we are meeting the needs of families, particularly those who have the least access to high quality early childhood learning.

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?

Stabilizing and sustaining the workforce in early childhood education starts with ensuring that the salary and benefits package is comparable to other professions and treating these educators like the professionals they are. Additionally, we must invest in salary growth and include a permanent cost of living adjustment for our educators. Professional development plays a key role in retaining highly qualified staff and supports ongoing learning in key areas. Finally, we must consider programs that recruit new teachers like supporting scholarships and loan forgiveness programs that attract prospective teachers to the field.

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

North Carolina has a constitutional responsibility to provide all children with a sound, basic education and that begins in the early years of a child's life, before kindergarten. Without key investments in critical infrastructure, we run the risk of sliding backwards and preventing thousands of children across our state from getting the access they need. This includes ensuring a robust workforce through incentive programs that attract teachers to the field, a salary and benefits package that support their retention, and investments that eliminate the waiting list for services. We should put in place universal pre-K so that all children, regardless of their zip code, have access to quality early learning opportunities and supportive transition to kindergarten that give them a better opportunity to have long term educational success.