

2022 North Carolina General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Christine Kelly

District: House District 37

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Sr. Marketing Manager, SAS Institute

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?

Access to healthcare for all North Carolinians is a top, top issue for us and how we can ensure the sound health of moms and babies. In addition, all youth deserve high quality public education starting with universal Pre-K. A child's preschool years are a crucial time in their cognitive, emotional, and social development, and participating in a high-quality early education program greatly contributes to children's later success. In North Carolina, the work has been done and the studies have been completed. If the funding designated for Pre-K in the Leandro Plan were fully allocated, for instance, we would be able to meet the needs of many more of its children. The 2021-23 budget, however, allocated a mere 15% of the funds needed for Pre-K and early childhood services, with zero new funds for Pre-K expansion. North Carolina desperately needs adequate levels of funding to cover the cost of delivering a high-quality Pre-K program for all children in need. We can and must do so much better and prioritize our children's early education.

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

Investing in education is my top priority. Southern Wake County has a quite young median age—35 years old. Which means our district has a lot of growing families that will need access to quality education. Per Leandro, we must address eight critical needs to provide a sound, basic education for all children in NC, including ensuring adequate finance and resource allocation, recruiting and retaining qualified educators, recruiting and retaining qualified leaders, ensuring quality early education, providing excess support for high poverty schools, accountability, support for regional and local school improvement, and monitoring the state's compliance. It's time to fully implement the Leandro Plan in order to provide an equitable, sound, and basic education for our children.

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?

Our state government must ensure that all our schools can provide a quality education for all students starting early in their lives. This starts with having excellent, fully-funded schools available across our entire state. Fully-funded schools will: give students the tools and

resources they need to succeed, keep and attract well-qualified and childcare workers, and provide healthcare resources in each school. As recently as December 2021, the NC Education Lottery announced they will allocate \$812 million over the next 2 years to help counties build and repair schools. Issuing bonds and retaining the current tax rate in addition to utilizing federal child care relief funding could help stabilize and sustain our early education system and childcare workforce.

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

We must follow through on the Leandro Plan, which details a roadmap for funding and policy recommendations to provide all students with access to the “sound basic education” they are owed under our state constitution. We need to increase teacher pay based on experience and education, and revisit returning benefits (e.g. post-retirement healthcare coverage) that have been stripped from teachers. We must also increase diversity among teachers by requiring administrations to take Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training with the goal of adjusting their hiring process to attract and hire a more diverse staff. Then we need to set and meet hiring goals to increase teacher diversity, which will also increase student representation. Furthermore, we must support bills like House Bill (HB) 1203 (2019-2020) and HB 348 “Add School Nurses for Healthier Students,” which would provide at least one school nurse in every school, and, recognizing that our schools rely on digital resources, support legislation that would provide affordable broadband access across NC.