



2022 North Carolina General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Graig Meyer

District: Senate District 23

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: State representative, social worker,
educational consultant

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 was one of the co-founders of the General Assembly's bi-partisan, bi-cameral Early Childhood Caucus. And although I am no longer in leadership of that group, I continue to be proud of the progress we have made through bi-partisan focus on early childhood over the last few years. Obviously, we have continued work to do. The top priority I see is in front of us right now is raising the pay of the early childhood workforce. When I tell people that early childhood educators sometimes make only half of what K-12 teachers make, they are blown away. We need to increase pay and draw great, caring people into the field.

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've done great with building a high quality early childhood field in North Carolina, and we should continue to use our system of incentives like the star rating system and supports like regional partnerships. I am more concerned about the affordability question. But part of the reason that staff pay is so low is that providing early childhood care is expensive, and families cannot afford it. I'm proud that we have dramatically expanded the number of state-funded pre-k slots over the last few years. We need to continue to provide state subsidy for those all those who need it. Like other forms of public education, there is no way to keep early childhood affordable unless we make public investments in it because we see it as important to the common good.

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 pending funding cliff is very concerning. The General Assembly should look at what the needs are and how we can address them. But advocates also need to pressure the Federal Government to expand early childhood funding in the standard budget. Those are really the only two answers to this dilemma.

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

I am so glad that the plan for addressing the Leandro court case does include early childhood elements. I do support each of the plan's proposals for early childhood, including: Increasing investment in the early childhood educator pipeline, scaling up Smart Start to make it available to more families, expanding NC-Pre K to serve all at risk 4 year olds, and making more effective connections between early childhood programs and elementary schools.