

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Donna White

District or Office: NC House District 26

Party Affiliation: Republican

Current Occupation: Legislator, Registered Nurse and Aging Specialist

Questions for 2024 Candidates for State Office in North Carolina

1. The most rapid period of brain development happens in the first five years of life, laying the foundation for all future learning, health, and success in school and life. What are your views on the needs of young children (prenatal to age 5) and what steps would you take to address these needs?

I agree that laying the foundation for future learning and healthy success in school and life begins at birth. I believe that parents should be the first teachers while providing love and support. When parents need assistance, a plan should be put in place to assist them.

2. Every county in North Carolina is considered a "child care desert" with not enough supply to meet the demand. When parents do find child care, the average cost is nearly \$10,000/year, which is higher than the cost of public college tuition. What steps would you take to ensure that families have access to high-quality and affordable early learning programs for their children?

North Carolina has been a state that has had a "star program" that provides better options in childcare facilities. That system is changing per request of DHHS, and I have concerns.

3. Currently, child care teachers in North Carolina earn an average of \$14/hour, less than most retail or service workers. Since 2021, federally-funded Child Care Compensation Grants have provided higher wages and bonuses to more than 40,000 North Carolina early educators, but that funding has expired. This summer, the NC General Assembly appropriated funds to extend the grants for a short time, while also recognizing the need to explore long-term solutions to attract and retain a qualified early childhood workforce. 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 Compensation Grant funding?

As a member of the NCGA I voted to support extending the grant. The long session will give us an opportunity to study the needs further and develop a plan to assist.

4. Working parents depend on child care, and businesses in nearly every sector have identified child care as a critical factor in their workforce challenges. A new study from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that insufficient child care is costing North Carolina about \$5.65 billion each year. What are your views on how the issues facing our state's child care system impact the state's economy? What specific steps would you take to ensure that our child care system can keep up with the demand as more working families need child care?

I am excited that we at the NCGA are already piloting a collaboration with businesses that will hopefully provide a model that will share the burden of childcare cost. I was one of the health chairs who put this pilot in the 2023-2024 budget.

5. North Carolina currently spends approximately 1% of the annual state budget on early childhood programs, including Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and Child Care Subsidy Assistance. Nearly all early childhood programs in every county of the state have waiting lists and only serve a fraction of eligible children and families. What are your goals for overall early childhood funding and/or what types of early childhood programs would you support making an investment in at the state level?

I am currently working with NC Child, Partnership for Children, and Smart Start. This session I was able to help them with their workforce issues and I meet with them on a regular basis.

6. If elected, what would be your top 5 priorities for 2025?

As a registered nurse, my role in the GA has been to get Medicaid expansion passed (which I was able to do in 2023). Now we are facing workforce issues in healthcare. I represent the fastest growing district in the state so I must address issues such as infrastructure (i.e. roads, water, and sewer) as well as housing and education for those moving to our state. Obviously childcare for my fastest growing district is very important to me.