

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Kelly Hastings

District or Office: NC House District 110

Party Affiliation: Republican

Current Occupation: Legislator, investor and realtor

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?

We should improve outdated systems, simplify policies, and eliminate unnecessary red tape.

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?

We need to support a flexible and affordable mix of options that help with childcare and early learning opportunities.

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?

We should be reluctant to support mandates that unnecessarily raise costs and burdens on families, individuals and businesses.

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?

We should support reforms that enhance training, upskilling, and reskilling for our childcare workforce.

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?

We should constantly search for efficient and effective ways to support the childcare industry as a whole.

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

1. I support policies in North Carolina that enhance economic security and reduce inflation for all of our citizens.
2. I support policies that will help prevent illegal aliens from destroying the sovereignty of our country.

3. I support policies that will help maintain the financial health of our state so we can continue to reduce debt and cut taxes.
4. I support school choice and other options that will help enhance student learning in North Carolina, and this includes childcare and early learning options.
5. I support policies that will help reduce crime and increase peace of mind for our citizens.