

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

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District or Office: NC House 74

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Current Occupation: Investor/Property Management

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?

Young children and their families need access to quality prenatal healthcare, affordable infant/child care, educated caregivers, community support & resources, and quality early education. As a state rep, I would support policies that promote early education, healthcare, paid family leave, equal pay, flexible work policies, and parental support. Programs and policies that educate caregivers and provide a competitive wage is critical--they are doing society's hardest and important (but often undervalued) work.

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?

The care and education of our children should be a nonpartisan, collaborative effort involving lawmakers, nonprofits, communities, schools, and families. We need increased funding for comprehensive, long-term, quality education programs, including family resource centers, community and home-based childcare options, subsidies and scholarships, tax credits/breaks for working families, and direct-to-provider funds/grants to ensure safe facilities and well-paid caregivers.

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?

It's important to explore the use of federal grants, community-based groups, nonprofits, and public-private partnerships that could bridge funding gaps. Reallocating funds or possibly boosting revenue may also be required to sustain quality early childhood programs.

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?

100%--education and our economy are connected. Underfunding education impacts everyone in the community and the ability of our state/community to attract jobs. Without access to affordable, quality childcare and early education, employers will experience loss of employee and productivity.

To meet growing childcare needs, I would fight for universal pre-k and support policies that offer grants, low-interest loans, and/or tax incentives to new and existing providers for facility upgrades or expansions and facilities. In addition, I would also explore supporting home-based childcare options, such as licensed family child care homes.

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?

After a careful review of the state budget for wasteful spending and which child care programs are providing excellent care, I would reallocate funds to boost incentives/pay for care providers, fund transportation costs, offer childcare benefits to families, and/or provide additional support to existing local childcare initiatives. Businesses should step up to help meet their employees needs through local providers, NEW public-private programs, child care vouchers, and/or on-site childcare options.

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

1. Protecting fundamental freedoms for all; families, women and children, including equal access to quality healthcare, childcare, and pay equity.
2. Fully funding public schools and providing early education opportunities for all children/families.
3. Supporting small business & and growing NC jobs.
4. Ensuring competitive wages for all educators and childcare workers.
5. Working across the aisle to find innovative public-private partnerships.