

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

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District or Office: NC Senate District 19

Party Affiliation: Republican

Current Occupation: 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?

The first five years of a child's life are critical for their future success. I believe in supporting families with access to quality prenatal care and early education, expanding pre-K programs, and ensuring that children receive proper nutrition and healthcare.

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?

I would work to expand access to high-quality early learning programs by increasing funding for pre-K, supporting public-private partnerships, and incentivizing providers to offer affordable care.

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?

I would advocate for increased state funding to replace expiring Compensation Grant funds, support higher wages for child care workers, and incentivize workforce retention through training and professional development 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?

Child care is essential for a strong economy, as it enables parents to work and contribute to our state's growth. To meet rising demand, I would work to reduce regulatory barriers for providers, increase investment in child care infrastructure, and offer incentives for businesses to support employee child care. Strengthening our child care system is key to supporting working families and boosting North Carolina's economy.

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?

My goals for early childhood funding include expanding access to high-quality pre-K programs, increasing support for child care providers, and enhancing parental involvement initiatives. I would prioritize investments in programs that have a proven impact on early learning, such as pre-K expansion, workforce training, and family support services.

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

My top 5 priorities for 2025 would be: 1) Strengthening the economy by supporting small businesses and job creation, 2) Expanding access to quality education, including early childhood programs, 3) Ensuring public safety and supporting law enforcement, 4) Infrastructure development, including funding clean water initiatives, and 5) Ensuring that money is directed to Fayetteville to support the critical needs of the community.