

2024 North Carolina State Office Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Rob Yates

District or Office: NC House District 99

Party Affiliation: Libertarian

Current Occupation: Writer

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 believe that young children will be a product of their environments and the most ideal setting for their development is safe environments with two parents, mostly healthy food (some snacks are ok here and there), books, play, plenty of sleep, and lots of new and interesting things. I also think that most children, even with great family and financial situations, are unlikely to have a perfect upbringing.

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 back the same education plan as Governor candidate Mike Ross, where every education dollar would be split evenly among all children, allowing parents to use the money for early-age childcare, education, and other resources and opportunities that are ideally suited for their respective children.

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?

By distributing all education money equally among children, quality child care professionals would make more money, and we would incentivize more good people to pursue careers in child care, as there would be more long-term financial benefits.

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 know of several companies that offer on-site child care or provide a child care allowance. Child care is only a problem when it becomes unaffordable for those who have no option because they have to work. Distributing the education money equally among students would ensure those parents could afford quality and reliable child care, not just at early ages, but all the way through high school.

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?

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

1. Economic changes that bring prosperity to all North Carolinians,
2. Education reform,
3. Criminal justice reform,
4. Government transparency,
5. Long-term environmental solutions