

2018

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE



Close the Gap NC encourages voters, advocates, and media organizations to ask North Carolina candidates running for elected office questions on health care related issues. The questions below can be used to engage candidates over the phone, in-person, via email, in letters to the editor or at public forums.

1 More than 640,000 North Carolinians who earn low incomes could gain health insurance coverage if the N.C. General Assembly expanded Medicaid eligibility to allow people all across the state to access preventative care screenings, check-ups, fill prescription medications, and get the treatment and care they need to be healthy and productive members in our state.

- **With polls showing that 66% of voters support Medicaid expansion, do you support expanding coverage to people who are uninsured? If not, how do you propose getting 640,000 people health insurance coverage in North Carolina?**

2 More than 300,000 North Carolinians fall into what's called the coverage gap, meaning they make too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to receive a subsidy or financial help on the Marketplace. Many of the families who fall into the coverage gap work in industries that don't offer insurance through employment, such as construction, retail or restaurants.

- **Do you support using federal dollars to close the Medicaid coverage gap and offer health insurance coverage to the 300,000 plus North Carolinians who form the backbone of our economy? Please explain.**
- **Studies from Ohio, a state with conservative leadership that expanded Medicaid, show that providing coverage so that people could take care of their health needs first allowed them to later find work or better employment once they were healthy. In fact, gaining employment and a better paying job after getting healthy was the leading reason people were later unenrolled from Medicaid and were able to get back on their feet. Do you support prioritizing good health in people before they can work or would you impose work requirements on Medicaid enrollees to be able to gain coverage? Please explain.**

3 In states that expanded Medicaid, rural hospitals are 84% less likely to close their doors compared to those in states that didn't expand Medicaid, like North Carolina. Since the

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General Assembly's decision to reject Medicaid expansion in 2013, our state has lost five rural hospitals. Some rural hospitals even lost critical services like maternity and labor wards and an estimated 40% of rural hospitals operate in the red. In rural communities, hospitals are often the largest employer and the economic driver for many other businesses, like the flower shop or pharmacy.

- **If elected, would you support expanding Medicaid to strengthen the financial stability of rural hospitals to stay open? If not, what would you do to ensure access to care and a healthy economy for our rural communities? Please explain.**
- 4** Communities of color have the highest rates of uninsurance, fare worse on health outcomes, and experience greater levels of poverty and toxic social and environmental stressors. It is more difficult for people of color to access care and treatment, especially for substance use disorders. Oftentimes, instead of getting treatment, people of color are disproportionately incarcerated for drug-related convictions, resulting in separated families and costing our state millions of dollars in incarcerating people who need care, not prison.
- **With more support and recognition—even among law enforcement—that our society cannot “arrest our way out of the drug problem,” if elected, what would you do to ensure people of color are offered the same opportunity and access to coverage, health care, and treatment rather than jails and prisons? Please explain.**
- 5** In other states that expanded Medicaid, private insurance premium rates are on an average 7% lower. In fact, Blue Cross Blue Shield recently announced their first premium rate decrease in more than 25 years, but said that rates could have been at least 15% even lower if not for the “uncertainty” from Washington D.C. politics. When more people are insured, health care is more affordable and accessible for everyone.
- **If elected, what would you do to ensure all people can afford quality health insurance so that prices can be lower for everyone? Please explain.**
- 6** A 2018 congressional report showed that prescription drug prices increased at almost 10 times the rate of inflation, making medications unaffordable for the vast majority of American households. Efforts to curb prices have largely been unsuccessful and/or absent on the state or federal level.
- **If elected, what would you do to ensure people can afford the medications they need? Please explain.**

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