

## **PA PAC Questionnaire for NC House and Senate - 2022**

Please return the completed form along with your resume or biographical statement describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience, as well as a high-resolution headshot of yourself as soon as possible, but by Sat Mar 19 at 5pm, at the latest.

Please e-mail your responses to PAC Coordinators at [papacboard@googlegroups.com](mailto:papacboard@googlegroups.com) by Saturday, March 19 at 5pm.

Please note that following the Saturday, March 19 at 5pm deadline, the People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Do not use colors or shading.

Please try to confine your responses to no more than 300 words unless another word limit is indicated. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.

If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.

Candidate's name: Rep. Zack Hawkins

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### **Why Are You Running?**

#### **1. What are the three most important issues facing North Carolina? What are your top priorities in addressing these issues?**

I am running for re-election because I still hold dear the values I ran on in 2018, that A Better North Carolina is possible. A place where any kid can/should be able to maximize their potential regardless of their race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs or zip code. The top three issues facing NC are:

##### **A. Education**

- a. Leandro and equitable funding. The NC GOP-led NCGA has the resources to support the court's call for \$1.7B to cover the first two years of the remedial plan. (I worked to support this effort during the legislative session through bill sponsoring/cosponsor and direct action through awareness campaigns with colleagues. I will continue to educate ppl in Durham and around the state to put pressure on GOP legislators to do the right thing. Polling shows everyone agree with equitable funding, so it's a winning issue for our party in addition to leveling the playing field for kids that live in less resourced communities.)

- b. Teacher raises and teacher diversity (I helped to birth the idea for the statewide taskforce and served as the legislative lead for the governor's teacher diversity efforts this session, filing and sponsoring bills to ensure that pay was adequately outlined as a determining factor in our inability to attract/retain/recruit, along with a host of other reasons why diversity is both great for the pipeline of qualified teachers but reflective of the growing student population statewide. I am going to anchor my legislative career on keeping this issue as a priority. As a former educator and grandson/friend/brother, I understand all the time and unpaid labor that goes to preparing for our students. Other states continue to recruit our teachers, as well as corporations. Like with Leandro, I will file bills and continue to work across the aisle to move this effort forward.
- c. Food Insecurity and lack of school psychologists and nurses (As a former teacher, this was one of the first things that I realized as a problem. As a higher education professional, I have witnessed Universities struggle to address it. The NCGA has an opportunity, as I outlined, to study statewide hunger in K12 and higher and pull together a taskforce to build a list of legislative and community recommendations, along with a list of statewide stakeholders. Students cannot perform if they are hungry. People commit crime to feed their families, along with other poverty based issues. The state wastes millions of food servings each year, without a strategy to direct it to those who need it most, then animals then to enrich our environment through composting and processes that would keep it away from landfills. Students have suffered greatly from the pandemic, socially and emotionally and need sustained access to mental health resources for the long haul. Colleges are able to address this through fees, K12 cannot. The ratio of student to professional is grossly inadequate and can be fixed in successive state budgets. I will keep filing bills, advocating and helping to elect legislators that will help fund these priorities.
- d. **Higher Ed Funding.** Community college needs to be free and HBCUs have been underfunded since their establishment and connection to the state. The Governor moved the ball forward on finish line grants for community colleges, as well as recommending they become free. Research out of Tennessee and Kalamazoo have shown a 40 percent increase in enrollment and a 25 percent increase in matriculation towards a bachelor's degree, respectfully. In a state with 58 community colleges, this would be a game changer and dramatic shift in our state that includes 735,000 current community college students. The data shows that costs are a huge barrier for students and families. Not only would it reduce costs, it would also help build the workforce needed to fill jobs currently unfilled in NC, especially in the hot job markets in House District 31/Research Triangle Park. I successfully advocated for and was acknowledged by my colleagues across the aisle for pushing for the largest investment in HBCUs in our state's history. This is still not enough for the decades of underfunding experienced by

these amazing and resilient institutions. Recently states have been sued and lost court cases regarding underfunding. I believe that NC does not have to go that route, but can remedy the issue by a self imposed study and appropriations plan. The state of Maryland alone was court ordered to pay \$544M for 4 state supported HBCUs. As the state with the largest enrollment, nation's largest HBCU and most 4 yr HBCUs in the country, this could be expensive if we dont act soon. I filed the most HBCU related bills last session and will continue to work on this issue.

## **B. Fair Maps**

### **State Revenues, State Spending, and the Economy**

#### **2. Is the current system of state taxation fair? What changes should be made, if any?**

**Please cite specific examples.**No, the current tax structure is not. Due to more corporate tax cuts, the state has infrastructure needs that cannot be met, programs being slashed, all in the name of bragging rights for the GOP and low taxes bring job investment . Just this session, the state budget called for personal income tax to go from 5.25% to 3.99% over the next few years. We stopped them from completely eliminating the corporate income tax, which is already the lowest in the region.

Direct remedies are to repeal cuts made in previous sessions and replace them with investments in education, transportation and evening the playing field for working families across our state. Otherwise, out of control higher education tuition, decreased K-12 spending and decreased teacher pay will be our fate for the foreseeable future, even with the historic state budget in 2021. Other states led by Republicans try and fail at cuts over investment. NC has to think long term on this issue, which will be top of mind for me as we look towards breaking the majority.

**3. Are you in favor of reducing government spending in any specific areas? If so, please list your top three specific areas and explain your reasons. Are you in favor of increasing government spending in any specific areas? If so, please list your top three specific areas and explain.**

Appropriations to the opportunity scholarship program is a place where disinvestment is needed. This program has not been used as promised (lots of money is consistently left over) and the criteria being manipulated to unfairly give tax dollars away to allow our money to completely subsidize private school attendance for families that could pay on their own.

**4. What is your stance on the state of North Carolina utilizing economic development incentives, such as the One NC and JDIG programs to attract and recruit corporations?**

I am not opposed to economic incentives that are fairly matched to the opportunity, with proper consideration for workers and actual job production and investment in the local economy and community. The incentives cannot mortgage away our future and misspend our hard earned money and not guarantee high paying jobs and livable wages. The workforce available to them and current business climate make us an attractive state to do business in already. The Cooper administration has done a decent job of not overdoing it in this area, as we have shared our belief that every deal doesn't deserve an incentive package.

#### **Secure Elections, Fair Elections, and the Right to Vote**

**5. What changes need to be made to NC law to protect the right of all people to vote in free and fair elections?** I pushed for automatic voter registration this session and intend to work until it's the law of the land. We need to remove the current barriers that come with registration and move to a pure focus on voter engagement and education.

I also would like to remove the barriers related to felon voting and increase access to incarcerated non-felon voters. As with Kentucky, many non-violent felons with completed sentences were restored their rights, to the tune of 200,000 +. I would like to start the ball rolling on this type of legislation in the next term, as we didn't get much traction in the 2021 term.

There are also many that would like access to jails and detention centers to register and/or help with the voting process, but find that it is mainly determined by the will of the Sheriff. Luckily, Durham has a Sheriff that is open to this idea, but I would like to work along with the statewide association to propose legislation to make this easier across the board.

We need to remove the threat of cutting early voting hours every election cycle. We need to make sure that we add convenience measures like drop boxes that are made available throughout the counties across the state. This convenience measure is friendly to working people and was shown to make an incredible difference in places like Georgia. You cannot

divorce the idea of fair maps from free and fair elections. I led on this issue, serving as the only democratic legislator to testify during the redistricting trial, which led to a redraw of unconstitutional maps for the 2022 election cycle.

## **Housing**

**6. What, if anything, should the NC government do to promote affordable housing and home ownership? What specific policies or programs would you use to do that? Do you support downpayment assistance for first time homebuyers? Rent control? Inclusionary zoning? Please detail your answer.**

While inclusionary zoning is still a ways off, I think that local governments should have the ability to negotiate with developers on affordable housing inclusion and minimums. One thing the state can do to better support these negotiations is by making sure more tax credits are available for these projects.

Rent control should be a local issue.

**7. What should the NC government do, if anything, to avoid an eviction crisis following the lifting of the COVID-era moratorium on evictions? As the NCGA did in the legislative session and follow up technical corrections bill, continue to expand who has access to funds from the federal government, as we did with the NC Homeowner Assistance Fund. No one should get thrown out of their home, when we have access to directly help landlords and tenants. As the crisis continues, we work to find resources in our reserve, in collaboration with the Housing Finance Agency and other statewide advocacy groups to apply for funds to create affordable housing options and relief.**

## **Wealth**

**8. What is your stance on the minimum wage? What do you consider to be a livable wage? What role should the NC government play in regulating wages?** A minimum wage of \$15-\$20 is what anyone with a job in our state should expect. It should cover all workers across North Carolina. I was a sponsor of bills towards this effort and co-sponsor for the inclusion of the classified employees, including cafeteria workers and bus drivers. I stood with workers this session to fight for this living wage. It brings dignity to a household, when you know that you can keep the lights on and put food on the table. NC has a direct role in encouraging businesses to do so and ensuring that the state government maintains this standard, through legislation.

**9. How can we bring more progressivity to North Carolina's tax code?** Increase corporate income taxes and allow variability based on income for local property taxes and state taxes. At minimum, bring back a sales tax holiday for moderate to low, working families that contribute the most in sales, as they spend a larger portion of their income on goods and services.

## **Guns**

10. What, if anything, should be done to reduce the proliferation of firearms and reduce gun violence in NC?

My colleague Marcia Morey led this charge this session. Extreme Risk Protection Orders, people who are a potential harm to themselves and others don't need guns. Limit the size of magazines. Make mandatory background checks and close the gun show loophole. Ban bump stocks. Never allow a teacher to have a gun at school. Ensure that we check the point of entry into poor communities and communities of color. As is popularly stated, no one in those communities is manufacturing weapons. We need to fight to punish dealers who push illegal weapons or turn a blind eye. I am not open to people having weapons, as it is their right. With this right is an expectation that it is protected, which means no one with a history of mental health issues and violence should have a weapon.

Every child and resident deserves to go home in peace, frequent popular locations in their town and play outside without fear of gun violence.

## **Civil Rights and Race Equity**

**11. What should the state do to promote racial equity and diversity, such as increasing opportunities for under-represented and under-served people of color? Can you provide an example of your advocacy for race-equity and diversity?**

I worked with the Governor's office to start the first ever Diversity summit targeted at recruiting, hiring and retaining teachers of color and understanding the barriers to making our state more reflective of the student population that it served. Over one hundred professionals attended with the Governor signing an Executive Order to create the first ever task force for the work to continue year round. I am very proud of this work. I led the legislative efforts this term on these issues with many items making it in the state budget.

I also lead the charge to get HBCUs/MSI on the Teaching Fellows Program list, as a way of creating a strong pipeline of teachers of color and maximizing our resources by including schools that are known for education. I am proud to share that three, NCATSU, Fayetteville State and UNC Pembroke, were added to the list. FSU was also added to the list of NC Promise universities, which makes it even more affordable at \$500 per semester for tuition.

The key to tackling this issue is also making available equity and diversity training for all incoming (and hopefully current) educators, as we are working to do with the Durham Public Schools foundation, where I serve as Chair of the board.

## The Environment

**12. Addressing the climate crisis through transformative, intersectional policies will be essential to keeping NC communities safe, healthy, and vibrant. What do you see as the most critical environmental and climate justice issues facing NC and your district? If elected, how would you leverage your role to address them?**

I will answer by stating what I will continue to work on in this area. Critical areas are:

1. Access to clean water
2. Access to affordable public transportation options and reduction on gas powered vehicles
3. Increase solar options for homes across the state
4. Access to clean energy jobs of the future

**13. Duke Energy's monopoly on our utilities has severely curbed the expansion of clean energy across North Carolina and locked us into the expansion of harmful gas plants – with disproportionate pollution and cost burdens falling on Black and Brown communities. What creative ideas will you bring to the Legislature to push back against Duke energy to create a more safe, affordable, and resilient electricity sector?**

- Continuous work alongside and empowerment of cooperatives, whose mission is affordable and clean energy solutions on behalf of their communities and customers.
- Expand securitization and use some of the savings to fund a just transition but helping communities that will lose fossil fuel plants transition to clean jobs with workforce development programs. Securitization was authorized to a limited degree by 2021 H 951 to create savings for customers when old uneconomic coal plants are closed. The idea of securitization is not controversial. Best practice is to use some of the savings generated to help communities and this has been done in several states.
- Authorize a percentage of income payment plan programs for low-income customers. The Virginia House passed a bill to implement state limits on energy burden for low income families (Percentage of Income Payment Plan or PIPP). More info about that bill here:  
<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?ses=211&typ=bil&val=hb2330&submit=GO>  
(VA Senate did not take this up).

- **General Info re Percentage of Income Payment Plans (PIPP):**

<https://www.raonline.org/blog/use-less-save-more-adding-a-conservation-incentive-to-percentage-of-income-payment-programs/>

In addition, below are recommendations to help with energy affordability which would be helpful to disadvantaged communities

- Set up a relief fund for ratepayers struggling with utility debt like a bill proposed (not yet passed) in Massachusetts: [HD.3313: An Act establishing an arrearage relief fund.](#)
- Pass an energy affordability law like Oregon's [HB 2475](#). ( [one pager about the bill.](#)) This was one of 3 bills (all passed) in the [Oregon Clean Energy Opportunity Campaign](#) led by front line communities.

**14. Other states like California and Colorado have rolled out “Climate Corps” programs that create thousands of good jobs increasing community resilience to climate change, reducing pollution, and building out renewable energy. What ideas do you have for how North Carolina can promote green jobs and workforce development, while addressing the climate crisis and reducing pollution in our most-impacted neighborhoods?**

In 2019, the N.C. Department of Commerce released a [Clean Energy and Clean Transportation workforce assessment](#) as required by Gov. Roy Cooper's Executive Order 80, "North Carolina's Commitment to Address Climate Change and Transition to a Clean Energy Economy." The report evaluates current and projected workforce demands in the clean energy and transportation sectors, assesses the necessary skills and education for employment growth, and recommends actions for the sectors' development. Its recommendations include supporting community colleges since one out of three workers in the clean economy participated in a Community College education or training program. And it recommends focusing on supporting education in specific areas of expected growth - like wind energy. The report lists the fastest growing projected occupations in the clean economy as:

Solar 43%

Transit and Intercity Bus Drivers 15%

Electrical Power-Line Installers 15%

First-Line Construction Supervisors 12%

Plumbers and Pipefitters 12%

Construction Managers 12%

HVAC Mechanics and Installers 12%

Electrical Engineers 11%

## **State and Local Government Relations**

15. **In what ways should NC preempt local governments?** In making sure there is a standard for equal protections against discrimination.

### **In what ways in which it currently does so should it not?**

It should not, as proposed in the last session, in the following ways:

- A measure that would reduce local authority over the relocation of billboards that are displaced by road construction.
- A measure, likely intended to aid charter schools, that would limit local government's power to require that new schools be constructed in appropriate areas with regard to available infrastructure and traffic patterns.
- A ban on local stormwater runoff regulations that exceed state and federal standards, a change that could serve developers and degrade water quality. Federal and state standards are guidelines, but local governments know better where stormwater problems are. They should have the power to protect their watersheds.
- A change that would keep towns and cities from passing tree protection ordinances on their own. In a state where trees are a major asset for the environment and the character of towns and cities, the budget provision states: "No local government regulations regulating the removal of trees from private property are enforceable unless expressly authorized by local act of the General Assembly."
- A curb on local governments' ability to regulate short-term rentals

## **Education**

### **Combining 16 & 17**

**16. What is your record of support for community colleges and what do you see as the role of community college in increasing access to economic mobility and higher education for those who want it? 17. What policies would you pursue to increase access to four-year college, community college, training programs, and workforce development initiatives?**

Community college needs to be free and HBCUs have been underfunded since their establishment and connection to the state. The Governor moved the ball forward on finish line grants for community colleges, as well as recommending they become free. Research out of Tennessee and Kalamazoo have shown a 40 percent increase in enrollment and a 25 percent increase in matriculation towards a bachelor's degree, respectfully. In a state with 58 community colleges, this would be a game changer and dramatic shift in our state that includes 735,000 current community college students. The data shows that costs are a huge barrier for students and families. Not only would it reduce costs, it would also help build the workforce needed to fill jobs currently unfilled in NC, especially in the hot job markets in House District 31/Research Triangle Park. I successfully advocated for and was acknowledged by my colleagues across the aisle for pushing for the largest investment in HBCUs in our state's history. This is still not enough for the decades of underfunding experienced by these amazing and resilient institutions. Recently states have been sued and lost court cases regarding underfunding. I believe that NC does not have to go that route, but can remedy the issue by a self imposed study and appropriations plan. The state of Maryland alone was court ordered to pay \$544M for 4 state supported HBCUs. As the state with the largest enrollment, nation's largest HBCU and most 4 yr HBCUs in the country, this could be expensive if we don't act soon. I filed the most HBCU related bills last session and will continue to work on this issue. I also pushed for NC to make our colleges more affordable and I am proud that Fayetteville State was added to the list of colleges eligible for \$500 tuition.

Locally, I have supported a push to connect our schools with jobs, an initiative that i started to work on pre-pandemic. I will continue to work to pull together all entities in this space and create annual discussion about how to use our assets for connections to jobs.

**18. What, if anything, should the NC government do to promote the education of youth in the history of civil rights, racial inequality, and the legacy of racial discrimination in the United States and NC?** History needs to be taught in its entirety. As a society, we know the past is filled with hurtful and shameful events and incidents, but the truth is what helps our students and society move forward. As we did with teaching of the holocaust, NC Government can expand our literary offerings to ensure that all are included and our full history discussed.

## **Party Politics**

**19. If you find your party in the minority in your elected body, what do you see as the role of the minority party? Please detail the role of deal making with members of the opposing party, especially on issues on which deep divisions exist. Please give specific examples from your past.** As a minority party, in our case with a Democratic Governor, we should be dedicated to upholding the veto. This is important because stopping bad legislation is akin to supporting good legislation. As a minority party, we are to continue to raise debate and make our constituencies aware of the best ideas forward and how to advocate for those in our minority status.

I believe the best way to negotiate is to know and hold true to the values of you and your constituents. For example, I believed that the Governor and other democrats did a great job on making a deal with Duke Energy and Republicans on rate hikes, etc, but it was still a bridge too far for my county. I am working on the sports betting bill and working to ensure that all of my democrats views are heard, protections are in place to support programs connecting to education, youth and incorporation of MWB. Many of my proposals made it in the state budget from IDD support to University funding. With any across the aisle work, you must be willing to walk away if the circumstances will ultimately damage your community.

## **Campaign Funding**

**20. Does your campaign have specific policies regarding from whom it accepts donations? Please specifically detail any contributions from corporations to your current and prior campaigns. How do you see the influence of donors on policy, both for yourself and for others?**

My votes are not determined by who decides to send me a campaign contribution. I have declined the opportunity to receive money from Duke Energy because our priorities do not align, environmentally. At the chance that they do overlap, I will still decline money because of the way I've seen them operate in elections against Democrats in previous election cycles. I have seen clear correlation between members of the GOP party being influenced by their financial relationship with Duke Energy and other corporations. Access should not allow them to write bills and give them to GOP legislators to carry out on their behalf, especially not policies that will hurt working people.

## **Your Politics**

**21. For whom did you vote in the 2020 United States Senate and presidential elections?**

I voted for the Democrat in each race to defeat Republicans Thom Tillis for US Senate and Donald Trump for US President. I supported Vice President Biden and the democratic nominee for US Senate.