

PA PAC Questionnaire for North Carolina General Assembly – 2020

Please return the completed questionnaire along with your resume or biographical statement describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by January 5 at the latest.

You may e-mail your responses to Tom Miller at tom-miller1@nc.rr.com or you may send a printed copy of your responses to PA PAC c/o Tom Miller 1110 Virginia Avenue, Durham, NC 27705-3262

Please note that following the January 5 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 and North Carolina.

Candidate's name: Natalie S Murdock

Seat you are running for: NC Senate District 20

Address: 2616 Erwin Rd Apt 1334, Durham, NC 27705

E-mail Address: nmurdock15@gmail.com

Phone: (336)207-0360

Website: natalieforncsenate.com

Why Are You Running?

1. Of all the issues confronting the State of North Carolina which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if you are elected?

#1 Improving Our Public Schools

Public education is a cornerstone of my campaign platform. It is for that reason that the first policy proposal of my campaign was centered around public education. The Lucas and Parker Education Plan is named in honor of the late great Senator Jeanne Hopkins Lucas and Omega Parker who were fierce leaders in public education.

I am a product of North Carolina public schools—from kindergarten to college. I take pride in my North Carolina education and remain committed to ensuring this state provides all children the opportunity to get the best education possible. Now more than ever, North Carolina leaders need to show a fierce

commitment to providing public schools with the support they need. The North Carolina Constitution states that we are required to provide our children with a sound basic education. The “Sound Basic Education for All-An Action Plan for North Carolina” report, also referred to as the “Leandro Report” shows that we are failing our children and not providing them with the education they deserve. Our public schools need more funding, teachers need higher pay, public school infrastructure needs greater support, and we must combat the school-to-prison pipeline. Racial and socio-economic inequality will remain prevalent if poorer districts fail to receive the funding and attention they deserve. “Without a renewed commitment to action, our children — and the future of our state — are at risk,” Public School Forum of NC.

Children also face challenges of racial inequity in North Carolina. According to the most recent [data](#), across the state, Black students were over four times more likely to be suspended from school than White students. Here in Durham County, Black students are almost ten times more likely to be suspended than White students. [Studies](#) show that suspension is a key factor in the school-to-prison pipeline, along with school-based arrests and lack of school funding.

In Education Week’s 2019 Quality Counts [report](#), North Carolina was ranked 37th for K-12 public school quality, receiving a “C-” grade and a score of 72/100. In the three categories of Chance for Success, School Finance, and K-12 Achievement, North Carolina consistently received scores below the national average, including ranking 48th in the nation and receiving an “F” grade for school spending. According to the most recent data, North Carolina spent over [\\$3,000](#) less per pupil than the national average. North Carolina currently needs an estimated [\\$8 billion](#) to address facility costs for their public schools. Current funding proposals—a statewide \$2 billion bond and a Senate-backed \$2 billion school construction fund—do not meet this need in full. Counties spend \$3 billion on instructional expenses or [24 percent](#) of the total share of federal, state, and local dollars. Further, as of March 2018, North Carolina had [50,742](#) eligible children on the waitlist for early childhood education and child care assistance vouchers.

In North Carolina, the state base teaching salary is [\\$35,000](#)—less than the amount needed ([\\$39,600](#)) to afford housing in Durham. Including the local teaching supplement, that amount increases to [\\$39,900](#)—just barely enough to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in Durham. The average base salary for teaching assistants is [\\$23,546](#), compared to [\\$23,262](#) for custodians. Further, North Carolina school employees have to work with less staff than the national average. In North Carolina, there is one school nurse for every 750 students, meaning school nurses serve [48%](#) more students than the federal standard. Additionally, there is one school social worker for every 1,427 students, meaning social workers are serving over [three](#) times more students than the federal standard. The state also employs one school counselor for every 350 students—[100](#) more students than the nationally recommended 1:250 ratio. In our district, [36%](#) of students in public school meet proficiency standards for their grade level in reading and [35%](#) meet mathematics proficiency standards. Yet, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill consistently ranks among the top [five](#) public universities, and North Carolina has been applauded as one of the [best states](#) to go to college.

As a state senator I would work to:

- **Raise wages.** North Carolina must provide ALL public school personnel with a \$15 minimum wage, \$45,000 starting pay for teachers with a bachelor’s degree, raise wages 5% for all non-certified staff, teachers, and administrators, and provide a 5% cost of living adjustment for all retirees.

- **Meet national staffing standards.** The General Assembly must ensure that public schools have adequate school librarians, psychologists, social workers, counselors, nurses, and other health professionals.
- **Restore benefits.** The General Assembly must [reinstate](#) retiree health benefits and compensation for advanced degrees taken from teachers in 2017 and 2013.
- **Fund early childhood education.** The state legislature must commit to funding [Pre-K](#) for all children and ensure that every child in North Carolina who qualifies for child care assistance receives it.
- **Increase funding to HBCUs & community colleges.** According to the North Carolina State Constitution, all schools in the UNC system should be free to North Carolinians “as far as practicable.” Let’s start with tuition-free community college.
- **Address infrastructure.** Natalie will work to ensure the state fulfills its obligation to fully support state public education facilities by dedicating [\\$8 billion](#) to updating and repairing school infrastructure.
- **End the school-to-prison pipeline.** Natalie will fight for a mandatory [implicit bias](#) and [restorative practice](#) training for all members of school communities, regular [audits](#) of North Carolina school districts’ disciplinary procedures, and research-based [alternative education programs](#) in every community. She will require school districts to create [memoranda of understanding \(MOUs\)](#) with law enforcement agencies limiting when school-based arrests and court referrals can occur.

Public schools in our district need adequate funding to provide our children with the education and tools they need to compete upon graduation. We must work to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow. Let’s pay our teachers what they deserve, expand free Pre-K, and fully restore our Teaching Fellows Program. Such programs should also aim to diversify our teaching workforce.

Politics and Voting Rights

2. What changes would you make to North Carolina's election and campaign finance laws and why?

Voting is a right. Election Day should be a state holiday and we should be automatically registered to vote. I applaud the hard work of Rep. Hawkins and Sen. McKissick to preserve Saturday voting and to ensure that student IDs could be accepted from various universities across the state. As a state senator I will strive to make voting accessible. The state must establish automatic voter registration, make election day a holiday, and guarantee that voters continue to have access to at least two weeks of early voting dates, including the Saturday before an election.

I support openness and transparency in campaign finance laws. I support reforms that work to take big money out of elections. Elected officials should have to answer to their voters and not have tunnel vision on high dollar donors. At the federal level, Citizens United should be overturned.

3. Support or Oppose – Please indicate whether you support or oppose the following. *If necessary, you may explain each of your answers with no more than 100 words.*

- a. Establishing a non-partisan redistricting commission for congressional and state legislative districts

Support Oppose

6. How does climate inform your policy view with regard to the environment, economic development, energy production, and transportation?

As Durham's Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor, I spend each day protecting our environment and the people who rely on it. In this role, I work to ensure high-quality drinking water, food production, and open spaces are available to the Durham community. My experience in local government and city transit make me well equipped to take on the environmental problems facing North Carolina today.

I pledge to fund and implement a Green New Deal for NC.

We all have a right to clean air and water. We need legislators that know climate change is real and are willing to do something about it. Studies show that even a fraction of offshore wind energy resources could help meet North Carolina's energy needs by [20%](#). A 2019 Emissions Gap [Report](#) from the United Nations states that mass transportation is necessary to curb emissions and reduce the impacts of climate change. I am committed to implementing evidence-based solutions to address our gaps in air and water quality, and I will increase state investment in renewable energy and programs that preserve and conserve our water.

The North Carolina legislature needs to commit to funding projects necessary to reach Governor Cooper's goal of producing 100% renewable energy by 2050.

- **Expand mass transit.** The General Assembly must commit to expanding mass transit across the state with an emphasis on low-cost or free public transit systems. This will drastically [reduce](#) emissions polluting our air and help reduce the effects of climate change. The state needs to commit to partnering with local and federal levels of government to support high capacity transit. As the 10th fastest growing state in the nation, it is long past time that we get serious about funding transit.

Educating Our Children

7. What measures, if any, do you believe are necessary to improve public education in North Carolina? In your answer please address teacher qualifications, compensation, and retention; the role of charter schools and vouchers; re-segregation; and takeovers of struggling schools. Please limit your answer to no more than 450 words.

Public schools in our district need adequate funding to provide our children with the education and tools they need to compete upon graduation. We must work to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow. I support public schools. Unfortunately, charter schools divert much of our public school funding and can perpetuate segregation in our schools. I believe charter schools need appropriate oversight. Takeovers of struggling schools can result in the opposite effect of what it intends. I do not believe takeovers are the answer to improving conditions of a school.

We have to pay teachers what they deserve, expand free Pre-K, provide incentives and fully restore our Teaching Fellows Program. Additionally, to improve our public education, North Carolina must provide all public school personnel with a \$15 minimum wage, raise wages 5% for all non-certified staff, teachers, and administrators, and provide a 5% cost of living adjustment for all retirees. The General Assembly must ensure that public schools have enough school librarians, psychologists, social workers,

counselors, nurses, and other health professionals to meet national staffing standards. We must [reinstate](#) retiree health benefits and compensation for advanced degrees taken from teachers in 2017 and 2013. The state legislature must also commit to funding [Pre-K](#) for all children and ensure that every child in North Carolina who qualifies for child care assistance receives it. According to the North Carolina State Constitution, all schools in the UNC system should be free to North Carolinians “as far as practicable”. Let’s start with community college and fund them to be free for our students and allot proper funding to our HBCUs. I will work to ensure the state fulfills its obligation to fully support state public education facilities by dedicating [\\$8 billion](#) to updating and repairing school infrastructure. I will also fight for a mandatory [implicit bias](#) and [restorative practice](#) training for all members of school communities, regular [audits](#) of North Carolina school districts’ disciplinary procedures, and research-based [alternative education programs](#) in every community. In addition, school districts will be required to create [memoranda of understanding \(MOUs\)](#) with law enforcement agencies limiting when school-based arrests and court referrals can occur.

Healthcare

8. Are you satisfied with the current system of providing healthcare to North Carolina residents? In your answer please address health care costs, the availability and distribution of healthcare services, Certificate of Need laws, and the roles of managed care organizations, Medicaid, and subsidized healthcare insurance under the Affordable Care Act.

I am not satisfied with our current healthcare system. According to the United Health Foundation, North Carolina ranks [33rd](#) overall for indicators of health and wellbeing. The Affordable Care Act is not perfect, but everyone deserves quality health care. Medicaid expansion should also be enacted here in North Carolina. The failure to expand Medicaid in addition to the ACA generates “coverage gaps” for many low-income adults that are unable to afford ACA (Kaiser Family Foundation). States that have expanded Medicaid have far fewer uninsured adults. Far too many people in Durham are one illness away from bankruptcy. Our broken system rewards those who have great health care plans from their employer or who make enough money to pay high health care costs while punishing those with low wages who have no health care coverage and cannot afford to be sick without pay. Addressing rising health care and prescription costs is critical to addressing poverty and low wealth. Expanding Medicaid is a step in the right direction. Federal plans such as Medicare For All are needed, but at the state level, we can work to keep premiums low and provide health care to more people through Medicaid Expansion.

Economic Welfare and State and Local Finances

9. Is the current system of state and local taxation and fees fair and adequate to meet the needs of North Carolina residents? What changes should be made, if any? Please cite specific examples. Please limit your answer to no more than 400 words.

No. North Carolina’s regressive tax code allows the richest 1% to pay [6.4%](#) of their incomes in state and local taxes whereas those in the middle and lowest quintiles pay approximately [9.5%](#). Tax cuts targeting wealthy individuals and corporations have slashed North Carolina’s public investment.

10. Should state and local governments be allowed to condition government contracts and incentives on local hiring and rates of compensation and workplace benefits and safeguards which exceed state minimums?

Yes. If the state or local government wants to incentivize local hiring and rates of compensation to exceed state minimums, then they should be empowered to do so. They should not be limited in their ability to provide decent living wages.

11. What should be the minimum wage in North Carolina and what workers should it cover?

According to MIT's [living wage calculator](#), the minimum wage in North Carolina is far below the wage necessary for a person working full time to support themselves--that is, to pay for food, shelter, medical care, and transportation. Further, in Durham County, transportation and housing make up almost [60%](#) of a single person's yearly expenses--20% and 40% respectively. [16%](#) of Durham County residents live below the poverty level, and a community health assessment recently identified poverty as one of the [top three](#) community priorities for Durham County residents. To combat poverty and ensure a living wage that can support people's livelihoods, the General Assembly must commit to increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2024 for all North Carolina workers.

Local Government

12. Do state laws authorizing local zoning and land use regulation properly balance the rights, interests, and expectations of developers, local governments, and ordinary residents?

We need to take a close look at our local zoning regulations. Zoning and land use are complex topics and local governments need more tools in the toolbox to allow local governments to manage land in a way that meets their local development goals. Preemption limits those tools and care should be taken in the General Assembly to do just that. There is no one size fits all. Local governments need to be empowered to have more control and those rights are not always balanced.

13. Should local governments have the authority to control rents and to compel developers to include affordable housing as a part of their projects?

Yes.

Legislation should be considered to control rent, delegating this option to the local governing body, and cap rent hikes. North Carolina needs a percentage cap on yearly rent increases. Developers should be compelled to build affordable housing or contribute to a local fund that subsidizes affordable housing.

Civil Rights and Race Equity

14. Would you support legislation designed to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people from discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodation, and access to government benefits and services? What consideration will you give LGBTQ people when evaluating the impacts of legislation generally? What skills and resources will you draw on to inform your position?

I fully support legislation destined to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people from discrimination in housing, employment, public accomodation, and access to government benifits and services.

North Carolina needs to repeal HB142 and establish an LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination statute, guaranteeing nondiscrimination protections in housing, employment, public places and spaces, credit, insurance, education, and jury service.

We must work to protect LGBTQ+ workers. The General Assembly must pass a workplace harassment statute that includes harassment on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation and establish a nondiscrimination ordinance so that employers cannot fire anyone on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Finally, North Carolina must allow for gender neutral markers on state documents and establish a robust hate crime policy that includes crimes committed because of gender identity and sexual orientation.

I look forward to working with organizations such as Equality NC to do all that we can to craft legislation that will protect and empower LGBTQ people.

15. 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?

Whenever possible, I apply a racial equity lens to all of my work and seek to build a culture that applies the tools and practices I've learned and lived.

As a transportation professional, I worked to encourage higher rates of minority business participation. Not only should minority participation goals be set. Great care and consideration should be taken to build and expand these businesses. As a state legislator I will work to ensure that each state agency has aggressive minority participation standards and goals, doing all I can to support our state HUB office.

I have been working in Durham to support minority-owned businesses and farming. We must work to ensure our residents are provided with the training and skills needed to compete in an ever-changing economy. In addition, as new businesses come to our community, let's make sure they hire locally, especially among our communities of color.

I propose that we examine state-wide law enforcement training with a racial equity lens. Across the state, law enforcement professionals are trained at the Justice Academy which falls under the jurisdiction of the North Carolina Department of Justice (NCDOJ). A taskforce can be created to seek input from community based criminal justice organizations to review Justice Academy training modules and provide suggestions, generating an action plan for improvement.

16. What, if anything, should be done about gun violence and the proliferation of guns in North Carolina?

We have reams of data that demonstrate a direct correlation between access to guns and gun-related deaths. Right here in Durham, as I talk with people in the community, the number one concern voiced to me is gun violence. I have talked with seniors who are afraid to leave their homes that they have lived in for decades – for fear of getting shot. What is missing is consistent leadership at the federal and state level that is willing to modify and change policies that make it far too easy to have access to guns. The North Carolina legislature has not passed any significant gun control legislation since 2015. I remain hopeful that we have reached a flash point where students and community organizations continue to organize, stand up to the NRA, and apply pressure for real reforms. Local and national organizations are working overtime, but our federal and state leaders have to step up to the plate and take action.

If elected, I look forward to working with Rep. Morey from the Durham delegation, who has been a state-wide leader on this issue, supporting HB 454, HB 86, HB 842 and HB 816. This collection of bills: provide extreme risk protection, require permits for long guns, registration of all assault-style weapons, reporting lost firearms, and clarify how to store weapons in vehicles. Democrat leaders stepped up and filled a discharge petition requesting that proposed gun law legislation be seriously considered and debated – not remain submerged in committees to die (Charlotte Observer).

17. Should the death penalty in North Carolina be abolished? If you believe it should be retained, would you change the way in which it is applied and administered?

I support reforms to the death penalty and a moratorium of the death penalty. Our justice system needs far too many reforms to continue executions. With cold cases, there are far too many examples where additional evidence is uncovered that can lead to exhortation or a sentence reduction. Having one life lost when that individual was innocent is far too many.

We have not executed an individual on death row since 2006 due to the work of non-profit and grassroots organizations around the state (INDY Week 2019). I applaud their work. I would support the bill filed by Reps. Meyer, Hawkins and Black to repeal the Death Penalty. Studies do not support the notion that the death penalty is an effective deterrent to crime.

18. Should state and local government law enforcement agencies have the discretion to decide whether to cooperate with the federal government in enforcing immigration laws and policy?

As a Soil and Water Supervisor, I joined elected officials across the state and signed onto a letter encouraging Governor Cooper to repeal a law that forces law enforcement agencies to cooperate with ICE. I personally reached out to Sheriff Birkhead during his campaign to talk with him about his stances of such laws and policies to ensure we aligned. As a state senator I do not support “Show Me Your Papers” laws that require sheriffs to ask people about their immigration status, report undocumented people to ICE or hand over/ detain undocumented people to ICE (Democracy NC).

19. What, if anything, should the State of North Carolina do to promote restorative justice?

Restorative Justice is an innovative and effective approach that shifts traditional views of criminal justice. Incarceration is not always the answer, we also need to lift up and build all parties have to

interact with the criminal justice system. Right here in North Carolina we have a number of strong examples of restorative justice. Durham can serve as a local model for the success of these policies through organizations such as “Restorative Justice Durham”. We should work with the Department of Justice system and our courts to develop ways that additional counties can learn from bse practices from across the state.

Political

20. For whom did you vote for in the 2012 and 2016 presidential and gubernatorial elections? For whom did you vote in the 2016 U. S. Senate election?

2012 President-Barack Obama Governor-Walter Dalton

2016 President- Hillary Clinton Governor Roy Cooper U.S. Senate Deborah Ross

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please do not forget to provide us with your resume or biographical statement.