

NORTH CAROLINA MUST INVEST IN CHILDREN: OUR ECONOMY DEPENDS ON IT

The future prosperity of North Carolina depends on our ability to foster the health and wellbeing of the next generation. When a society invests wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. If North Carolina is to prosper in the future, we need to make sure that all children have the opportunity to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually.

We believe it's the responsibility of our state's leaders to make the decisions that will get our kids on the right track.

Investing in children benefits all North Carolinians.

- » Smart investments in evidence-based mental health care, high quality early education and preventative health care yield **higher graduation rates, reduced crime, higher earnings, less reliance on social services, and better jobs.**
- » Early learning investments have a profound impact on children and the communities in which they live. This broader societal impact is so significant that military leaders, business executives, and law enforcement officers are calling on greater investments to **ensure our national security, our global competitive edge, and our safety.**
- » Investments in older children and youth also pay huge dividends. Scientists tell us that adolescence, like early childhood, is a great building moment in the brain's architecture. The parts of the brain that control judgment, foresight and consequences are developed during these years. That's why smart investments in public schools, mentoring programs and the juvenile justice system are so important in the transformation of child into a young, responsible adult.

When NC invests in its children, it produces results.

- » In 2011, Duke University researchers found that in counties with more funding for Smart Start and NC PreK, children had **higher third grade reading and math scores and lower special education placements.** The study showed that **these investments had a "spillover" effect throughout the community,** benefitting all children regardless of participation.
- » With financial support from the state, community-based public education efforts have helped to lower North Carolina's high school smoking rate by 44% (from 27.8% to 15.5%) and our teen pregnancy rate by 58% since its peak in 1990.
- » As a result of a concerted effort by state leaders, North Carolina's juvenile crime rate dropped 27% between 2000 and 2011.

Our work is not done.

While we have made amazing progress in North Carolina, we still have work to do:

- » In 2011, 25% of NC children lived in poverty.
- » NC ranks 48th in per-pupil spending on public schools.
- » In 2011, 16% of N.C. teens ages 16 to 19 and 22% of young adults ages 20-24 were not in school or working.
- » NC ranks in the bottom 5 for infant mortality rate in the US.
- » Nearly one in eleven North Carolina children lacks health insurance.
- » More than 43,000 children from low-income, working families are on the wait list for child care subsidy.

As you craft your budget and make important policy decisions, we urge you to consider what's worked in the past and to build on those investments. We also hope that you'll develop new, creative solutions for some of the most persistent problems facing our children. With a booming population, the need is greater than ever before. Lastly, and most importantly, we expect you to ask yourselves at every turn: how will my decisions and actions affect North Carolina's children?

Contacts: Rob Thompson, Covenant with North Carolina's Children, 919-649-2449, rob@nccovenant.org
Brandy Bynum, Action for Children, 919-834-6623, brandy@ncchild.org.