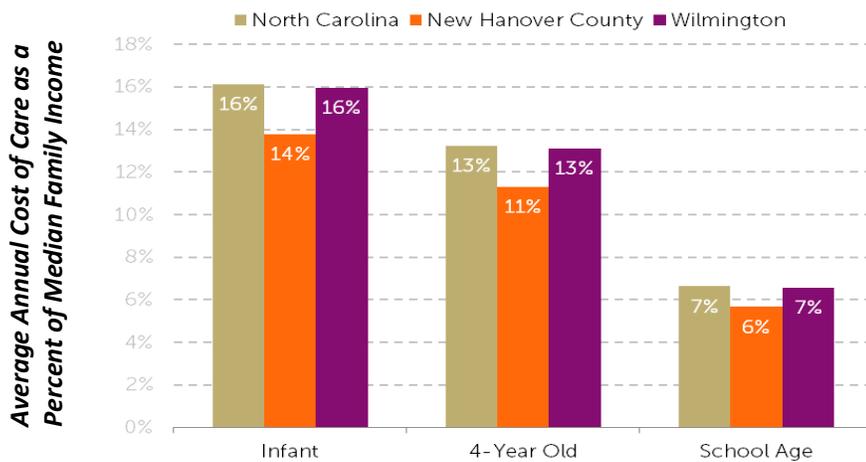


The Challenge

High-quality child care is unaffordable for many low- to moderate-income families. While North Carolina (with support from the federal government) provides subsidies for some families, over 20,000 children remain on the waiting list for assistance. Furthermore, many families that need child care assistance are not eligible due to current income requirements.

Child Care Creates a Financial Burden for Families



Source: NC Child analysis of 5-Year American Community Survey, 2010-2014

In 2014, the average annual cost of full-time care in a legally-operating child care center for an infant was \$9,255—one-sixth of the average Wilmington family's median income and 1.4x the cost of in-state public college tuition.

The Opportunity

North Carolina can expand access to child care assistance by increasing funding for child care subsidies and by increasing the income eligibility threshold, particularly for children over the age of 5 who are currently subjected to the most stringent eligibility requirements.

Policy Landscape

In 2016 the state budget included a marginal increase of 260 child care subsidy slots, which won't have a significant impact on the current waiting list. Increasing funding for child care subsidies in a meaningful way would require additional state dollars, which would demand a significant increase in political will. In 2015 legislators addressed some problems with eligibility determinations, but maintained the eligibility threshold for children ages 6-12 at the reduced level of 133% of FPL. Based on recent actions by the state legislature, it will be very difficult to achieve significant increases in the eligibility threshold during the 2017-18 legislative session.

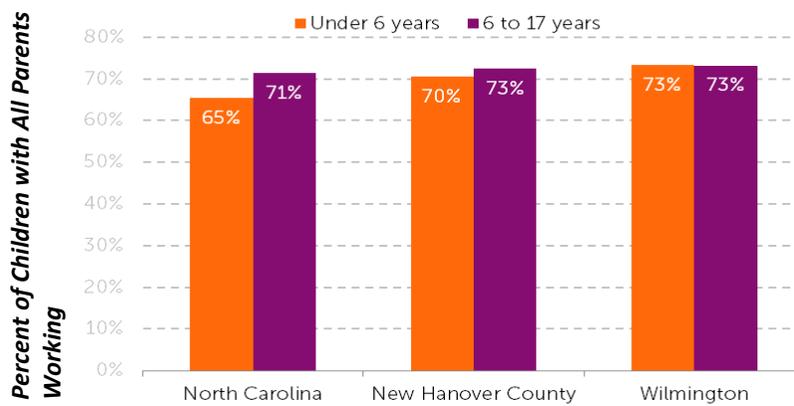
Other Considerations

Advocates must consider several important factors when prioritizing needed policy solutions including available community assets, current and historical barriers to change, and the overall impact proposed changes will have for children and families.

The Challenge

North Carolina children need their parents to have the ability to earn a living and take care of themselves and their children. Unfortunately, 1.46 million private-sector workers in North Carolina are not entitled to any earned paid sick or family leave. That's 44.7 percent of the private-sector workforce that must give up needed wages and possibly risk their jobs so they can care for their own health needs or the health needs of family members.

Most Wilmington Children Live with Parents Who Are Working



Source: NC Child analysis of 5-Year American Community Survey, 2010-2014

73 percent of children in Wilmington live in homes where all parents are working.

The Opportunity

North Carolina has different policy options at its disposal to provide working parents and caregivers the ability to take time off of work without losing their job or pay. The state can require employers to provide employees with a certain number of paid sick days each year. The state could also set up a family leave insurance program that can provide temporary paychecks when an employee or family member needs long-term care.

Policy Landscape

Unfortunately, paid family leave has become a very partisan issue. Bi-partisan support will need to be built in order for any significant movement to take place regarding state policy. Organized business groups also have strongly opposed several paid family leave initiatives. The issue will be considered by the NC Child Fatality Task Force in 2017 and there is growing support in the medical community for paid family leave options.

Other Considerations

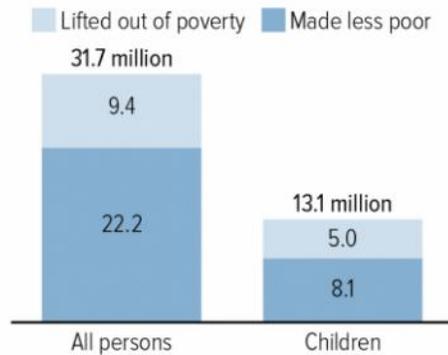
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The Challenge

Across our state, North Carolinians are working hard in low wage jobs that don't pay enough to make ends meet. As a result, many families and children are trapped in poverty despite their best efforts to work their way out.

Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit Have Powerful Antipoverty Impact

Millions of persons lifted out of poverty or made less poor (using Supplemental Poverty Measure) by EITC and CTC, 2013



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2016).
Policy Basics: The Earned Income Tax Credit.

In 2013, the EITC lifted about 6.2 million people nationwide out of poverty, including about 3.2 million children.

The Opportunity

The EITC is one of the most effective tools for lifting children and working families out of poverty. The EITC is a refundable tax credit, which means that it rewards working parents with extra money each year. Between 2010-2012, the federal EITC kept 145,000 North Carolina children above the poverty line. North Carolina can enact a state EITC to increase the effectiveness of the current federal tax credit.

Policy Landscape

North Carolina established an EITC in 2007, but allowed it to sunset for the tax year ending in 2013. There is significant bipartisan support for reestablishing the EITC nationally, but in North Carolina that support is primarily limited to Democrats.

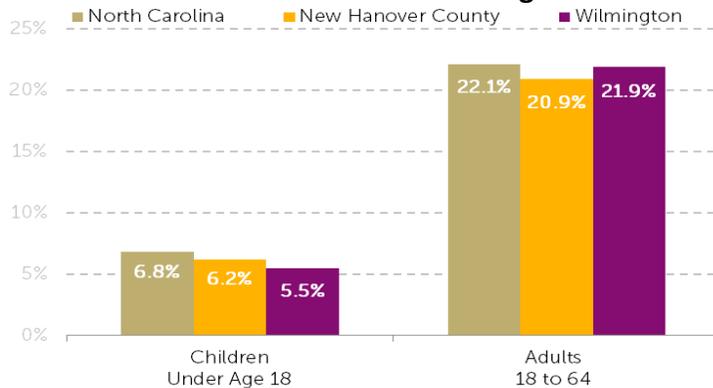
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The Challenge

Over 100,000 parents in North Carolina are caught in the health insurance coverage gap--they earn too much to qualify for Medicaid and too little to afford health insurance in the private marketplace. Most are working in industries that don't provide employer-sponsored health insurance, including food service, construction and retail. Without insurance, parents are often unable to access needed health services that can prevent and manage chronic health conditions and keep them on the job. Furthermore, the uninsured are much more likely to fall into medical debt, which can leave families in financial ruin.

More Than One in Five Adults in Wilmington is Uninsured



Source: NC Child analysis of 5-Year American Community Survey, 2010-2014

26 percent of uninsured adults in Wilmington earn less than 138 percent of the federal poverty line (about \$16,243 for a single adult).

The Opportunity

We know that children are healthier and more successful if their families are healthy--physically, mentally, and financially. That's why making sure parents have access to health insurance, which can prevent catastrophic medical debt and chronic illness, is critical for the health and well-being of our state's children. The good news is that North Carolina lawmakers have the opportunity to accept earmarked federal funding to cover 90% of the cost of expanding health insurance coverage.

Policy Landscape

Up to this point, lawmakers and the Governor have refused to move forward on expansion. There is bipartisan support in the legislature, particularly in the state House, but obstinate opposition in the Senate. Because of legislation passed in 2013, the Governor must get legislative approval to expand Medicaid eligibility and take advantage of federal funds. If North Carolina does choose to expand coverage, it will likely create its own plan for expanding coverage rather than utilizing the current Medicaid program.

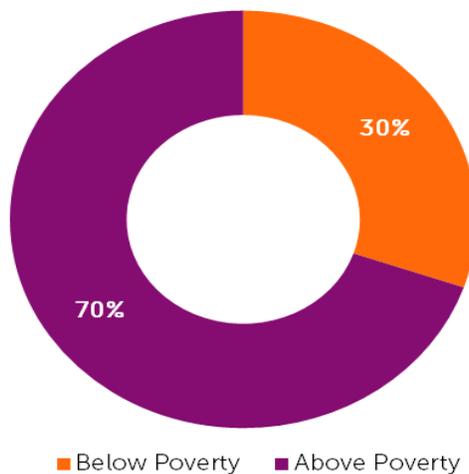
Other Considerations

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The Challenge

Thousands of four-year-olds in North Carolina do not have the ability to attend pre-k either because of cost or lack of available programs. In 2015, the waitlist for NC Pre-K surpassed 7,200 children. The program is serving 5,476 fewer children today than it was in 2009.

Wilmington Preschool Enrollment by Poverty Status



53 percent of Wilmington 3-and 4-year olds are enrolled in preschool, compared to 43 percent statewide.

Source: NC Child analysis of 5-Year American Community Survey, 2010-2014

The Opportunity

The research is in--the earlier we start to educate children the better they do in the long run, not just academically, but in other aspects of life as well. North Carolina could expand the NC Pre-K program to give all four-year-olds access to high-quality pre-kindergarten and a strong start to their academic careers.

Policy Landscape

The state budget approved in 2016 included a very modest expansion of 260 NC Pre-K slots. The legislature remains focused on third grade reading outcomes, which should be a good avenue to argue for increased funding for NC Pre-K.

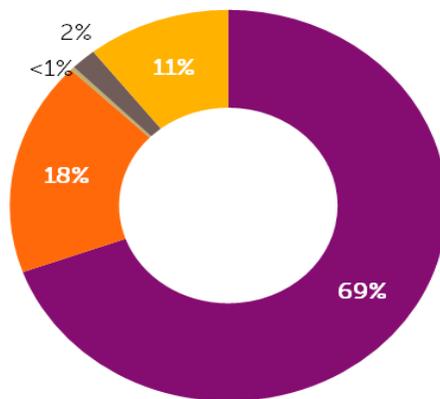
Other Considerations

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The Challenge

Parents struggling to figure out how to pay the bills, buy food, and afford medicine are under incredible pressure. Such high-stress demands can make the challenging task of parenting even more difficult and overwhelming—putting children at greater risk for learning disabilities, behavior problems, developmental delays, and health problems.

In 2014, more than 2,200 babies were born in New Hanover County



■ White ■ African American ■ American Indian ■ Other ■ Hispanic

Source: NC Department of Health & Human Services State Center for Health Statistics. 2014 North Carolina Infant Mortality Report, Table 1.

One in five New Hanover children is under the age of 3.

The Opportunity

Voluntary home visiting programs are a proven strategy for helping families ensure their children are born healthy, stay healthy, and stay on track for school success. By matching families with professionals such as nurses or social workers, families receive the support they need to care for their children, in their own home. Research shows that home visiting improves a wide variety of outcomes for children and their parents.

Policy Landscape

There is currently an array of home visiting programs operating in North Carolina, including the Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, and Early Head Start / Home-based Option. These programs are supported primarily by federal MIECHV funding, but some projects like the Nurse-Family Partnership, receive additional state support. Additionally, several communities across NC have a universal home visiting program, Family Connects, that was developed and tested in Durham, NC.

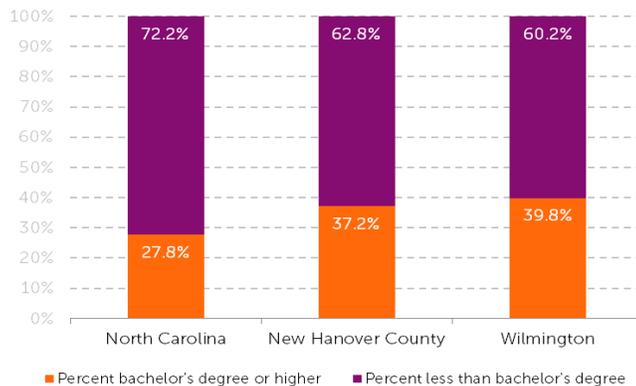
Other Considerations

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The Challenge

College access and affordability create barriers that can prevent children, particularly low- and moderate-income and children of color, from achieving their postsecondary goals.

2 in 5 Wilmington residents has a Bachelor's degree or higher



Source: NC Child analysis of 5-Year American Community Survey, 2010-2014

By 2020, an estimated 67 percent of jobs in North Carolina will require postsecondary education.

The Opportunity

Just a small amount of savings can make a big difference in college attendance and completion rates. In fact, research shows as little as \$500 in savings increases the likelihood that a low- or moderate-income child will enroll in college by three times and makes her or him four times as likely to graduate.

Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs) are an innovative tool to help children and their families save by providing them with seed funding and often later incentives for participation. CSAs are long-term savings or investment accounts that provide incentives to help low-income children and their families save for college and other postsecondary learning opportunities. Most CSA accounts are established early in a child's life with an initial deposit by a community-based organization, foundation, government, or private institution. Deposits are then made by a child or their family and can be matched dollar for dollar (or at some other rate) by a sponsor, providing an additional savings boost to low-income families.

Policy Landscape

In North Carolina, CSAs are being utilized as part of larger anti-poverty efforts in Durham and Rockingham Counties. Several years ago, a group of stakeholders including NC Child, CFED, MDC, and the NC Bankers Association discussed a statewide CSA, but a proposal was never pushed forward. This is an interesting policy solution because it can be achieved through local public-private partnerships and has the support of many financial industry leaders.

Other Considerations

Advocates must consider several important factors when prioritizing needed policy solutions including available community assets, current and historical barriers to change, and the overall impact proposed changes will have for children and families.

The Challenge

The rules governing the enrollment and administration of many child and family programs in North Carolina often undermine their purpose. Specifically, enrollment in Medicaid can be subject to long delays, leaving patients with unaddressed health issues. Many programs have eligibility thresholds that leave families with no support after a small increase in income. These include child care subsidies, SNAP and Medicaid.

It Takes More to Make Ends Meet in New Hanover County Than Minimum Wage Earnings or the Federal Poverty Level



Alexandra Forter Sirota, Tazra Mitchell, and Cedric Johnson (2014). Living Income Standard. NC Budget and Tax Center.

Workers in New Hanover need to earn more than twice the Federal Poverty Line to make ends meet.

The Opportunity

Streamlining enrollment and reenrollment for programs like Medicaid and SNAP would save the state money while helping families access needed services. Additionally, addressing the Cliff Effect, the abrupt cutoff for social supports that penalize modest increases in income, would help more North Carolina families work their way toward economic self-sufficiency.

Policy Landscape

One of the main advantages of administrative advocacy efforts lies in the fact that they do not require a policy change. Also, there is broad agreement that improving the efficiency of government services is a good thing and when we do so it makes our community better. In addition, we can gain important allies when advocating for consumer-friendly, administrative changes that then can lead to broader partnerships. However, administrative advocacy can be tedious and frustrating and also can require an intense amount of resources and expertise that many advocates and organizations find hard to come by.

Other Considerations

Advocates must consider several important factors when prioritizing needed policy solutions including available community assets, current and historical barriers to change, and the overall impact proposed changes will have for children and families.