

CANDIDATE PROFILE

Candidate Name:	Briyana Storm Baker
Position/Office on the Ballot:	Town Commissioner for Conetoe, NC
Party Affiliation:	Unaffiliated

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE + MATERNAL HEALTH:

1. As federal policies threaten to widen health and economic disparities — particularly through cuts to Medicaid and SNAP — what strategies would you advance at the local level to build a more equitable and cost-effective system of care that ensures all residents can access the services they need, regardless of income or insurance status?

I plan to push forward the creation of a parks and recreation center that will double as an ECU Health telehealth hub, which will allow residents to access health services without worrying about transportation. I will also work to bring more small business into the area, which will improve access to essentials, especially for residents who do not have reliable transportation.

2. With rural hospitals in North Carolina already under threat of closure due to rising uncompensated care resulting from cuts to Medicaid, what investments or partnerships would you support at the local level to expand access to primary care, mental health services, and maternal and child health — especially in underserved areas within your municipality?

I intend on advocating for the town to partner with ECU Health to bring telehealth services to the community. With telehealth services, it will be easier for residents to access basic physical and mental health services, as well as maternal and child health services — all covered by insurance or drastically cheaper than going out of town for health services.

3. How would you ensure that community voices — particularly those most impacted by health disparities and barriers to care — are meaningfully included and elevated in shaping local policies and programs aimed at expanding access to healthcare and addressing systemic inequities?

I would take measures to ensure that citizens are informed about public meetings and regularly-scheduled monthly meetings of the town, which would be done through social media and flyers. I will also create stricter guidelines for how elected or sworn officials, as well as employees of the town, conduct themselves with citizens, to ensure that citizens feel free to express their concerns to the town without fear of retaliation.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

1. Do you support ordinances that penalize people for sleeping in public spaces, panhandling, or living in their vehicles? Why or why not?

I do not support such ordinances because criminalizing housing insecurity and poverty does not eradicate the issue. One of the purposes of a municipality is to aid individuals facing distress due to systemic factors (i.e. homelessness). Our government should be taking more restorative practices to the issues that citizens face.

2. What is your plan to address homelessness without resorting to criminalization or displacement?

My plan on the local level would be to consult with developers looking into land near the area to bring affordable housing to the community. My community is in dire need of housing, and having those options would help alleviate the issue. I would also support nonprofits or grant initiatives that would directly address homelessness for the area.

3. What policies will you support to ensure law enforcement officers in our town are held accountable for the use of deadly force, especially when it results in the injury or death of unarmed individuals?

I would fight to end qualified immunity for law enforcement officials in the state of North Carolina. While my town does not have its own police force, the use of deadly force by LEOs is a significant concern for the citizens of our town. I will support any law ensuring that the LEOs are held accountable for their actions.

DEMOCRACY

1. How will you address underrepresentation in North Carolina's voters—especially among Black communities and young voters ages 18-29?

Ensuring that citizens have access to information about local politics is the first step for ensuring that underrepresented populations will vote in elections. By livestreaming meetings, publicizing meeting minutes and agendas online, and providing other relevant information online, more voters will be empowered by the information to participate in their local politics. When talking to young voters and members of the Black community in my town, their number one reason that they do not participate in local politics is lack of access to crucial information. Reducing the barrier to information will encourage people to take action with the local politics.

2. How will you ensure that state and local district maps reflect fair representation across party, race, and geography?

While my town's local district maps currently have an at-large election, I understand that maps on the county and state level could not have fair representation for voters. During the census where maps are being redistricted, I will be working with local, grassroots organizations to fight for fair maps that ensure that representation is fair across party, race, and geography.

3. Would you support legislation to establish a truly independent, non-partisan commission for redistricting, free from legislative influence?

Yes, I would support such a commission. If elected, I will join organizations dedicated to establish a non-partisan commission for redistricting on local and state levels.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

1. What policies will you support to foster innovation and encourage an equitable entrepreneurial environment in the state?

While my knowledge of entrepreneurial matters is limited, I do know that strengthening the social services aspect of our communities is a great start for encouraging individuals to start and maintain their own small businesses. Small businesses are the backbone of my town and the community. Ensuring that people have access to essential goods, grants and initiatives to support small businesses, and making sure that people have a strong safety net will encourage community members to pursue entrepreneurial interests without fear of financial hardship or economic setbacks to their business.

2. The NC workforce is dealing with cooling hiring markets and ongoing labor shortages across education, transit, health care, public service and more. What specific initiatives – such as apprenticeships, skills-based hiring, or public-sector retention programs would you support?

I would support any initiative that companies, businesses, or educational institutions promote for dealing with job insecurity in the area. On the local level, that would include partnering with said institutions so they can bring their initiatives to the citizens of my town, especially the youth. Edgecombe County, as a whole, is dealing with high unemployment rates, so I would search for ways that the county is addressing the labor shortages and work with them to bring job opportunities to the community.

3. Current state legislative budget proposals aim to reduce personal and corporate income tax rates tremendously by 2030. Do you believe such cuts are fiscally responsible given projected revenue shortfalls, or would you oppose accelerating them?

I do not believe that the cuts to income tax rates would be reasonable if there is a risk of a projected revenue shortfall. If it were only a tax reduction for personal income taxes below a middle-class tax bracket, I would support it. However, I believe that individuals are unfairly taxed compared to large corporations, and I believe that large corporations should pay more taxes to not only contribute to the state revenue, but to make sure that our tax system in general is more equitable. There is tremendous work that needs to be done on the state level to make sure that wealthier individuals and corporations pay their fair share of taxes, as well as ensure that we are not bleeding the middle and working-class of what little funds they already have given the economic instability of the country.

EDUCATION:

1. Considering the consistent defunding of public education that we have seen over the past several years as a result of poor policy decisions, what is your plan of action to ensure that you are coordinating with the school board to provide the best quality education feasible for students?

My plan would be to attend school board meetings and listen to the board, superintendent, and other educators about how I could meet their needs on the local school level. While my role would be limited as a commissioner of a town of roughly 200 people, I see how I could help the schools in my community through school supply drives, highlighting students in the community who are achieving academic success, and supporting educators fighting for better working conditions and increased pay.

2. Do you support increasing educator pay to meet the national average and reinstating master's and related advanced degree pay?

Yes, I support increasing educator pay and reinstating master's and related advanced degree pay. North Carolina must make such changes to compete in the educational field market and encourage other people to join the educator field to address teacher and staff shortages present in our state.

3. What is your stance on private school vouchers? Do you support using public funds to fund private school voucher programs?

I do not support private school vouchers. It is unfair to taxpayers that our money is going towards private schools who can pick and choose who they want in their institutions. Such institutions are not open to the public, so they should not be funded by the public. Furthermore, some private schools also endorse certain religions, with Christianity being the most prominent one that I see. While I would support an individual's right to exercise their freedom of religion, as well as a private school's right to endorse a religion of their own, I believe that the private school vouchers are a violation of the church-state separation that the U.S. is founded on.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1. North Carolina faces various water quality challenges, including contamination caused by PFAS, CAFOs, and other forms of industrial and commercial pollution. How do you plan to ensure communities across the state, particularly yours, will have access to clean, safe drinking water?

Currently, my town is trying to get an environmental study completed around the area to determine the drinking water quality in the area. Having such data, regardless of the results that it yields, will be a stepping stone for the town to fight for healthier drinking water. I would support town ordinances that would restrict or ban the forms of industrial and commercial pollution in the area. I would also work with environmentalists, water experts, and other related members of the community to fight for clean, safe drinking water on the legislative level, especially for a rural area such as mine where governmental oversight over pollution and waste has long been overlooked, especially for areas with a majority-Black population.

2. With recent federal limitations of the IRA and the continual removal of environmentally sound initiatives, as well as the impacts of defunding Medicare and Medicaid, how do you plan to

ensure readily and equitable access to healthcare and other resources to ensure community needs are met?

For healthcare needs, I will support the town with the renovation of the old fire department, which will be turned into a parks and recreation site. I hope to form a partnership with ECU Health to turn the site into a telehealth hub, where residents can see their primary care specialist without leaving their community and incurring financial costs with seeing doctors at clinics. I will also be searching for partnerships with land developers to build affordable housing near my community, as well as grants that would improve Conetoe's infrastructure in terms of flooding and road maintenance.

3. Greensboro: What is your stance on the toxic waste site, Bingham Park, located in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Greensboro? Do you support the community's request for full remediation?

N/A