

Here are the pertinent parts of the petition for the Children's Advocacy Coalition:

Whereas, there is currently no formally existing coalition or entity within the WNCC UMC with a committed emphasis on the broad spectrum of challenges faced by the children of this state, which include but are not limited to the following:

- 1.** Advocating and response for quality public education as a basic human right. Every child deserves an education that challenges and develops the gifts and talents with which they were created so they might become contributing members of society; equal access to quality education is crucial to further understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between people of all races, socioeconomic levels, national origin, abilities, and gender.
- 2.** Advocating and response for the development of quality childcare/daycare programs. Research reveals that the care infants receive has significant long-term effects on cognitive development. High-quality care and early learning for young children affects how they will learn later in life. Childcare is a significant financial challenge for families and affordable services are limited.
- 3.** Advocating for quality afterschool care. According to the North Carolina After School ayAlliance, there are 234,908 children being served in afterschool programs in North Carolina, with 523,140 children awaiting enrollment in an afterschool program. The number of children left unsupervised after school is estimated to be 295,984.
- 4.** Advocating for universal, early, and quality preschool education for all children. Children entering kindergarten have widely varying knowledge levels, making it difficult to provide appropriate instruction for all children in the early grades; quality preschool education significantly improves a child's academic performance and chance for overall social and economic success.
- 5.** Advocating and response for disconnected teenagers and young adults ages of 16-24. When children grow up in an unstable environment, with few positive role models it often paves the way for a difficult transition to adulthood. One in nine young people in the United States between the ages of 16-24 are neither working nor attending school. Others suffer from poor health conditions that hinder their ability to develop physically or socially. They are more at risk for early pregnancy and violence, physical and mental health conditions, illegal drug and heavy alcohol use, poverty and homelessness, and increased incarceration rates.
- 6.** Advocating and response for appropriate support of children in foster care. According to Crossnore School and Children's Home more than 11,000 children in North Carolina are in foster care. The Children's Home Society of North Carolina says the number has been steadily rising since 2012 and is at its highest rate in the last 10 years; about 600 children age out of the system without being adopted by a permanent family.

7. Advocating and response for children with disabilities. Every child with a disability has a right to a free appropriate public education. Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1975 (IDEA) which guarantees a free appropriate education to each child and promised federal funding for 40 percent of this cost. However, funding levels to the states have never reached this target and help for students has persistently fallen short at federal, state, and local levels.

8. Advocating and response for enhancing and building family resources. Children thrive in environments where connections to assets both outside and inside the family structures are strengthened as building blocks for age appropriate growth and development.

9. Advocating and response for post high school educational opportunities for all. Affordable post-high school education and career readiness should equip young adults to fully participate in the well-being of our communities; and,

Whereas, the Mission Engagement Team provides oversight and funding for Congregations for Children (C4C); C4C is well positioned and prepared to develop and provide oversight of the WNCC UMC Child Advocacy Coalition through the C4C Conference Team and support through the Mission Engagement Team. C4C is changing the lives of children and families impacted by poverty through collaboration with public schools.

C4C is comprised of four areas of focus: Poverty and Advocacy, K-3 Literacy, Basic Needs, and Family Engagement; therefore, be it Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Conference Mission Engagement Team establish a Child Advocacy Coalition, with oversight from Congregations for Children, to promote equity, opportunities, and well-being for all children in Western North Carolina and to educate, resource, and equip the church in response and advocacy for the many challenges faced by the children of Western North Carolina.