

## Prioritizing What Matters

This has been quite the year so far! The North Carolina General Assembly has been busy working on bills covering everything from the sanctity of human life, to parental rights, to fairness in women’s sports, to gambling expansion, and we have been right alongside them the entire time, fighting to support good legislation and oppose bad legislation. Nationally, our country has been having heated conversations about the definition of “sex” and “gender,” what counts as free speech, and the proper role of parents in the lives of their children. We’ve hit a point in history where cultural challenges are coming at us from every angle, and, as Christians seeking to be salt and light in the culture, we have to be ready and willing to stand up for the issues we truly care about – speaking the truth in love.

In this issue, you will find articles addressing some of the most pressing issues we’ve been standing up for this year. Brian Balfour, the Senior Vice President of Research for the John Locke Foundation, has written a piece highlighting the importance of parental rights, especially when it comes to maintaining the innocence of children. In an age where children are being inundated with woke ideologies and inappropriate topics at schools, prioritizing parental rights and protecting children’s innocence is critical.

If you’ve followed the news in North Carolina over the last year, you have seen that the abortion industry has been changing rapidly. After the *Dobbs* decision, which overturned *Roe v. Wade* last year, there have been laws and lawsuits attempting to either protect life or protect abortion. We’ve taken a look at where abortion stands today in both North Carolina and the United States and created an infographic so that you can see the progress that has been made to protect the lives of the unborn and their mothers. The right to life is a fundamental priority, and we are excited to see so many states standing up to protect it.

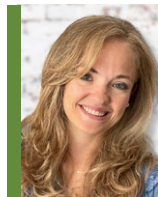
My contribution to this edition features what I have fondly dubbed my “Coffee Tour,” where I traveled to four unique coffee shops across the state. As a coffee lover, this was a bit of a dream come true for me, but what I loved even more was the unifying goal of these coffee shops. Each of them is uniquely designed to offer dignified employment opportunities to people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). During these trips, I got to taste some amazing coffee, meet some amazing people, and witness the amazing work that they are doing. The way a society treats its most vulnerable members is a good indication of the society as a whole, and I absolutely loved seeing how these businesses prioritized the lives and dignity of the IDD community.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the General Assembly has been debating a wide variety of issues this spring and summer, and NC Family President John Rustin has provided an informative recap on the actions our state lawmakers have taken on some critically important issues. During this session, our state has made substantial strides in defending unborn life, honoring parental rights, expanding school choice, and protecting children from the dangerous effects of gender-affirming drugs and surgeries, among other things. At the same time, these same state lawmakers have expanded predatory gambling and have given serious consideration to the legalization of marijuana in North Carolina. The 2023 Session has been full of ups and downs, and this article chronicles this year’s legislative roller coaster ride.

Thank you for reading *Family North Carolina*. We hope you enjoy the content found inside this edition. Please reach out to us at NC Family to request more copies to share with friends, family, neighbors, churches, and more! 🏠

*AnnaScott*

*AnnaScott Cross is the Communications Director for the North Carolina Family Policy Council and is Editor of Family North Carolina.*



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**Editor**

AnnaScott Cross

**Design**

Leslie Boyd

**Circulation**

Trisha Ruckart

**Contributors**

AnnaScott Cross  
Jaden Grimes  
John L. Rustin

**President**

John L. Rustin

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