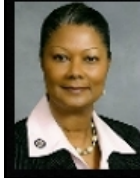


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Representative Carla D. Cunningham
106th District, Mecklenburg County
Carla.Cunningham@ncleg.net



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May is Mental Health Month



May is Mental Health Month. It is important to remember that mental health is part of an individual's overall health. It is also important to learn the early signs and symptoms of mental illness and to seek help from qualified professional.

Approximately one in five American adults, our friends, colleagues, or loved ones will experience a diagnosable mental health condition, like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or post-traumatic stress syndrome. Some people will be troubled by significant emotional and psychological distress. This can be triggered by death of a loved one, long term illness, job loss, divorce, and home foreclosure.


One-half of all chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14 and three-quarters by age 24. Unfortunately, too often there are long delays -sometimes decades-between the time symptoms first appear and when people get treatment. For most of these people, treatment can be effective and recovery is possible.


Everyone should learn the symptoms of mental illness. One invaluable resource is the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) which offers information through its website www.nami.org. NAMI also offers free education courses for individuals and families affected by mental illness, as well as support groups.


The mission of the Mental Health Association of Central Carolinas is to promote mental wellness through advocacy, prevention, and education in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties. The Mental Health Association of Central Carolinas has been promoting mental wellness in the Charlotte Region for over 80 years. Read more here: <http://www.mhcentralcarolinas.org>

We as a community need to talk about what we learn with family, friends and others. Help end the silence and stigma around mental illness that too often discourages people from getting help.

Today, millions of Americans still do not receive the care they need. This month, I recommit to ensuring all North Carolinians have access to quality, affordable mental health care services.

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Each year, May is the month when nurses are recognized and celebrated in the United States. These days and weeks of recognition are a way for nursing professional associations to honor their members, and well as to promote nursing careers to potential future nurses. Additionally, National Nurses month is also a time for employers to recognize their nursing staff.

Caregiver Relief Act HB 269

The Caregiver Relief Act expands eligibility for federal family and Medical Leave Act-protected unpaid family medical leave to include care of siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, step parents and parents in law. Providing expanded family and medical leave is good for workers, good for business, and good for the economy. It's time to provide paid leave for workers and their families.



HB 867

No One-Yr Separation Req/Domestic Violence

An Act to eliminate the required One-Year waiting period of separation for absolute divorce when a person in the marriage is a victim of domestic violence.

This bill amends GS 50-6 to allow a person who is the victim of domestic violence committed by the person's spouse to seek a divorce without having to meet the one-year period of separation. Specific information and documentation that must be included in the application for divorce. Applies to actions commenced on or after the date the act becomes law.

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse. Domestic violence is an epidemic affecting individuals in every community, regardless of age, economic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or nationality. It is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behavior that is only a fraction of a systematic pattern of dominance and control.

Domestic violence can result in physical injury, psychological trauma, and in severe cases, even death. The devastating physical, emotional and psychological consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and last a lifetime. It is not always easy to determine in the early stages of a relationship if one person will become abusive. Domestic violence intensifies over time. Abusers may often seem wonderful and perfect initially, but gradually become more aggressive and controlling as the relationship continues.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence. There is NO "typical victim". Victims of domestic violence come from all walks of life, varying age groups, all backgrounds, all communities, all education levels, all economic levels, all cultures, all ethnic groups, all religions, all abilities, and all lifestyles.

Victims of domestic violence do not bring violence upon themselves, they do not always lack self-confidence, nor are they just as abusive as the abuser. Violence in relationships occurs when one person feels entitled to power and control over their partner and chooses to use abuse to gain and maintain that control. In relationships where domestic violence exist, violence is not equal, even if the victim fights back or instigates violence in an effort to diffuse a situation. However relationships differ, but what is most common in all abusive relationships is the tactics used by the abuser to gain and maintain power and control over the victim.

Anyone can be an abuser. They come from all groups, all cultures, all religions, all economic levels, and all backgrounds. They can be your neighbor, your pastor, your friend, your child's teacher, a relative, a co-worker, or anyone. It is important to note that the majority of abusers are only violent with their current or past intimate partners.

House Passes Budget Plan in Bipartisan Vote

The House overwhelmingly approved its \$22.2 billion budget plan for the coming fiscal year. The final 93-23 vote came at 1:15 a.m on May 22, 2015. A majority of Republicans and Democrats in the chamber voted to back the bill. The vote came after 61 amendments were considered on the House floor, with 41 approved.

The state budget (HB 97) is now in the hands of the Senate, which will craft a version preferred by that chamber. The entire house budget is available at the General Assembly's Web site.

- A more extensive review of House Bill 97 - 2015 Appropriations Act is available on the General Assembly web site www.ncleg.net.

H97 provides several budget increases to behavioral health programs, funds the Medicaid rebase for the

The background on the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the first and only legislation written specifically to help workers meet the dual responsibilities of family and work, was signed into law in 1993. Since its implementation, the law has allowed more than 35 million workers to keep their jobs while they take care of a family health crisis or welcome a new baby. FMLA guarantees job-protected, unpaid leave for up to 12 weeks to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, care for a seriously ill child, parent or spouse, or recover from a serious illness.

But it doesn't go far enough, FMLA provides vital protections to worker who need to care for their families. But it doesn't provide enough. That's why we introduced the Caregiver Relief Act. We need to help workers by expanding FMLA because too many workers cannot access the FMLA. Many part-time workers, workers at companies with fewer than 50 employees, and those who do not meet other eligibility criteria are not covered, leaving out more than half the workforce. Only about one-fifth of all new mothers are covered by the FMLA. People of color and young adults in their childbearing years are less likely to be covered by the FMLA. Care for a sibling, grandparent, grandchild, parent-in-law- anyone other than a child, parent or spouse- is not covered.

The definition of "family" under the Family and Medical Leave Act is too narrow and does not recognize how many different family members are involved in care-giving- and as a result need to be covered by FMLA.

There are 1.73 million family caregivers in North Carolina providing care to an adult with limitation in daily activities at some time during the year. North Carolina ranks 6th in the nation in the number of children under 6 living in households where a

biennium, and provides planning dollars for Medicaid reform. It also provided increases in funding to foster care and medical examiner programs.

In the area of pay for State Employees, the House Budget would give a 2-percent pay increase to state employees, teachers and provide increases for public schools and the university system. Gives 40 extra hours of bankable leave to state employees. Funds a step pay increases for state troopers, assistant and deputy clerks, magistrates and other employees with a salary step plan. It will place funds in reserves to implement a custody-level pay plan effective January 1, 2016 for Correctional Officers such that Correctional Officers at minimum, medium, and close custody facilities are compensated on different salary grades. The budget will make market-based pay adjustments for (1) sworn officers of the State Highway Patrol, (2) Forensic Scientists with the State Crime Laboratory, (3) the Codifier of Rules, and (4) the Director of the Transportation Museum.

In the area of Education, the House budget raises beginning teacher salaries to \$35,000 and gives a 2% pay increases to all teachers and school personnel. Certified school nurses shall receive a salary supplement each month of 10% of their monthly salary on the "A" salary schedule. The plan also provides the first step of the salary schedule for school psychologists and school speech pathologists who are licensed as speech pathologists at the masters degree level or higher shall be equivalent to Step 5 of the "A" salary schedule. These employees shall receive a salary supplement each month of 10% of their monthly salary and are eligible to receive salary supplements equivalent to those of teachers for academic preparations at the six-year degree level or the doctoral degree level. The twenty-sixth step of the salary schedule for school psychologists, school speech pathologists who are licensed as speech pathologists at the masters degree level or higher shall be 7.5% higher than the salary received by these same employees on the twenty-fifth step of the salary schedule.

In the area of Public Safety, the House budget changes the source of funding for the Statewide Misdemeanant Confinement Program by discontinuing the use of court costs and making a recurring general fund appropriation to the program. The budget creates a new Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Funds appropriated for use of force training for state and local law enforcement officers. It also directs a study on the implementation of body-worn cameras by law enforcement officers and establishes a reserve for local and county law enforcement officers to acquire and begin using the devices. To improve efficiencies in the State Crime lab, the plan funds additional technician positions and creates a reserve for toxicology outsourcing. In response to calls for increased funding for our court system, the House appropriated nearly \$20 million to fund Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) IT projects. The House budget will fund 66 positions at Central Prison Mental Health Facility to open 72 additional beds and establishes mental health behavior treatment units at eight close custody prisons. Four units are effective January 1, 2016, and four units are effective January 1, 2017.

In the terms of tax credits and incentives, after much debate the House restored the medical deduction on income taxes eliminated last year, and appropriated \$40 million for incentives for film productions and 41 million for a program to try to eliminate food deserts across the state. A previously included \$44 million tax credit for companies that hire state universities for research and development work was eliminated in the final negotiations. Funding was included for the Historic Tax Credit \$8 million per year and a two-year extension of the renewable energy credit with reduced funding in the second year.

In the area of Retirement, the House Budget funds a 2-percent cost-of-living adjustment for state retirees and fully funds the Annual Required Contribution to the Teachers and State Employees' Retirement System.

In the area of Health Plans, the House Budget fully funds the employer portion of the State Health Plan, but makes funding subject to further benefit reductions for the next biennium.

In the area of Transportation, the House Budget cuts 50 filled administrative positions to reach outsourcing targets.

What Members Talked About During the Budget Debate

The North Carolina House voted on 45 amendments during debate Thursday and early Friday over the chamber's two year state budget. Here are the outcomes of contentious or high-profile issues

Read more here:

grandparent provides that child's primary care. There are over 100,000 grandparents responsible for their own grandchildren. Families are relying on grandparents, stepparents, in-laws, and siblings for care giving.

Now, some folks are concerned that this common sense change will hurt business, but nothing could be further from the truth. Proving expanded family and medical leave makes good sense for businesses. Nearly two-thirds of employers say that complying with the FMLA is very easy or somewhat easy. Replacing an employee permanently, rather than providing leave, can cost as much as five times the employee's yearly wages, with additional losses in productivity and employee morale. The costs of losing an employee (advertising for, interviewing and training a replacement) is often far greater than the cost of providing short-term leave to retain existing employees. In a recent cost-benefit analysis of the recent federal paid leave proposals, reduced turnover accounted for the majority of the expected savings. Family medical leave accomplishes these same goals.

Expanding family and medical leave would provide significant savings in reduced turnover. Mothers who gave birth after the passage of the FMLA were more likely to return to the same employer and took less time away from paid employment than those who gave birth before the FMLA.

Providing expanded family and medical leave is good for workers, good for businesses, and good for the economy.

**School Psychologists
Salary/Sixth Tier
HB 547**

House Budget Faces Uncertain Future

Gov. McCrory proposed a \$21.5 billion General Fund budget for 2015-16, and \$22.2 billion for 2016-17. The House budget is set at \$22.2 billion the first year and \$22.4 billion the second. The chamber's plan is a 6.3 percent increase for the biennium over the 2014-15 budget. Asked for a reaction to the House proposal, McCrory spokesman Rick Martinez responded, "The governor stands by his budget". "I would imagine Senate leader Phil Berger, and the leadership of many of our senators, want to maintain what we have accomplished with tax reform, and actually move it in the direction of less credits, less deduction and exemption, and continue lowering the rates," said Sen. Bob Rucho, R-Mecklenburg, co-chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

Read more here:

http://www.carolinajournal.com/exclusives/display_exclusive.html?id=12076&utm_content=buffer6a71e&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

Senate Aims to Pass Budget by June 11

Senate budget subcommittees received spending targets and timelines this week, with the Senate's budget calendar indicating that the chamber intends to give final approval to its budget on Thursday, June 11. According to the calendar, that would set up a two-week conference process with the House, allowing both chambers to pass and agreed-upon budget by June 30. Many legislative observers would be surprised if a budget agreement was reached that quickly. The Senate has already indicated that its budget would look markedly different than the House's version. Chief Senate budget writer Harry Brown told WRAL that the Senate's version would increase spending from the current budget by approximately 2.75 percent, while the House's budget increased spending by closer to 6 percent. In addition to ideas like further tax cuts and funding for Medicaid reform that have been discussed by Senate leaders, budget documents distributed this week also indicated that the Senate would be reviewing all transfers of money out of the Highway Fund to pay for non-Highway Fund programs.

House Passes Bill Allowing Magistrates to Opt Out of Same Sex Marriages

The N.C. House voted 64-45 to allow magistrates to opt out of performing weddings - legislation that stems from the legalization of same-sex marriages in North Carolina last year...Because the House made no changes to the legislation already approved by the Senate, it will go directly to Gov. McCrory. In March, McCrory voiced concern about the bill and said he won't sign it. He stopped short, however, of saying he would veto it. The governor can allow bills to become law without his signature. Senate Bill 2 would allow magistrates and register of deeds employees to be exempt from performing weddings if they have a religious objection.

Read more here:

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article22486821.html>

Numerous Alcohol Provisions Rolled into a Single Bill

A bill that originally dealt with selling 20-year-old bottles of liquor has now become a sweeping omnibus adjusting eight different areas of the state's alcohol laws. The Senate Commerce Committee rolled out the newly expanded bill. Some of the changes are relatively technical, such as a provision that allows brewers to lease their equipment to smaller brewers and another that allows distillers of cider to sell jugs of their products known as growlers. Others have been well-debated, such as a proposed ban on powdered alcohol. The measure passed the House with a wide margin of support, and nobody spoke against it.

Read more here:

HB 547 was filed in the House of Representation on April 1, 2015. The primary sponsors on the bill is Representatives Fisher, Cunningham, B. Turner, and L. Johnson.

HB 547 is a bill to be entitled: **AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE SIXTH TIER FOR THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS, SCHOOL SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS, AND SCHOOL AUDIOLOGISTS SALARY SCHEDULE.**

This bill makes the first step of the salary schedule for school psychologists, school speech pathologists licensed as such at the master's degree level or higher, and school audiologists who are licensed as audio pathologists at the master's degree level or higher equivalent to Step 5 of the "A" Teacher salary schedule for the 2015-17 fiscal biennium. Provides these employees a salary supplement each month of 10% of their monthly salary. Provides that these employees are eligible to receive salary supplements equivalent to those of teachers for academic preparation at the six-year or doctoral degree level.

Provides that beginning with the 2015-16 fiscal year, the 26th step of the salary schedule for school psychologists, school speech pathologists, and school audiologists meeting the academic preparation levels and licensing requirements as described in this act, will be 7.5% higher than the salary received by these same employees on the 25th step of the salary schedule.

Medicaid Reimbursement/Immunizing Pharmacists HB 810

HB 810 was filed in the house on April 14, 2015. The primary sponsors on the bill are Rep. Avila, and Rep. Cunningham.

Feds: NC Food Stamp Approval Time Among Slowest in the Nation

The federal government is again threatening to withdraw operational funding for North Carolina's food stamp program - this time over the speed at which health officials are approving applications. In a letter to the state's health agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said North Carolina social services workers failed to approve applications within the required 30-day window, or one week for emergency applications. In 2013, the state processed those application an average of 75 percent of the time, ranking fifth from the bottom when compared to the rest of the country. That means North Carolina lags behind neighbors Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina and even territories such as the Virgin Islands and Guam.

Read more here:

<http://www.wral.com/feds-nc-food-stamp-approval-among-slowest-in-nation/14670357/>

Privilege License Repeal Leading to Property Tax Hikes, Service Cuts

Cities across the state are in the final stages of preparing their FY2015-16 budget, and the pending loss of privilege license revenue is leading to a number of proposals for property tax increase and service cuts. Here is just an example:

Staff in Charlotte are proposing a 1.35 cent property tax rate increase, to be paired with elimination of garbage collection fee single-family homeowners pay. The Charlotte Observer reported that "the city is struggling to balance its budget in part because the General Assembly repealed the business privilege license tax."

ACTION ALERT:

Over the past few months, constituents, have lobbied legislators, meetings have been held in Raleigh and across North Carolina, and newspapers have written countless stories regarding the need that cities have for revenue options as the pending repeal of the business privilege license tax looms. With June here, please contact legislators to again let them know about the effects of this \$62 million fiscal cliff on your city or town. Let your voice be heard about the service cuts or property tax hikes being considered to make up for this revenue loss, and let them know about other revenue challenges facing your community.

Rep. Carla Cunningham: House Committee Assignments 2015-2016 Session

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Please feel free to contact my Legislative Assistant Ms. Sherrie Burnette at 919-733-5807 (cunninghamla@ncleg.net) or me at 704-509-2939 (carla.cunningham@ncleg.net) if you have any

HB 810 is a bill to be entitled : **An act to provide Medicaid and NC Health Choice reimbursement for immunization administered by Immunizing Pharmacists**

This bill would require The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Medical Assistance, to provide Medicaid and NC Health Choice reimbursement for the administration of vaccinations or immunizations provided by immunizing pharmacists in accordance with G.S. 90-15B

Up Minimum Wage/ Set Rates/ Add COLA HB 868

HB 868 was filed in the House on April 14, 2015. The primary sponsors on the bill are Rep. Cunningham, and Rep. Baskerville.

HB 868 is a bill to be entitled: **An act to increase the State Minimum Wage, To set Wage Rates Based upon size of the Employer, and to provide for Automatic Adjustments to reflect increases in the Cost of Living.**

This bill would require Large employer (an enterprise whose annual gross volume of sales made or business done is not less than five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) (exclusive of excise taxes at the retail level that are separated stated). Employers meeting this criteria would raise minimum wage to \$9.00 an hour for hourly page employees.

business done is less than five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) (exclusive of excise taxes at the retail level that are separately stated) Employers meeting this criteria would raise the minimum wage rate to \$7.75 an hour.

There has been several minimum wage increase put forth in the House. No action has been taken on any of them.

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