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Legislative Updates from the Office of Rep. Nasif Majeed

Representative Nasif Majeed [majeedla@ncleg.net]

Sent: Thursday, May 09, 2019 3:43 PM

To: Steve Johnston

May 9, 2019

Representative Nasif Majeed

District 99 - Mecklenburg County

STATE BUDGET UPDATE

PEACE. The pace at the General Assembly has been fast and furious and will remain that way over the coming weeks. The House filed a total of 1,013 bills this session. Committees have been debating and moving large numbers of bills through in preparation of today's "crossover" deadline. Any bill without a fee or appropriation had to pass its chamber of origin and "crossover" to the other chamber in order to be eligible to be heard during this session.

The most important bill passed each year is the State Budget. It invests around \$24 billion of our money we pay in taxes in public education, health, public safety, and for other public purposes. The budget is a two year spending plan and covers fiscal years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Typically, legislators will amend the two year budget at its halfway point in next year's session.

Before the State Budget becomes law it must pass the State House, then the State Senate, and then both legislative chambers need to agree on the same version. At this point the State Budget goes to the Governor who can sign it into law or veto it. If he vetoes, legislators can try to override the Governor's veto or work out a new budget agreeable to him.

Last week the State House passed its version of the State Budget on a 61 to 55 vote. I voted No.

All budgets have good and bad and this one is no different, but the bad outweighs the good in these key areas:

1 - Still No Medicaid Expansion

Medicaid expansion will close the coverage gap for 500,000 North Carolinians. Expansion will help people lead healthier and better lives. It will help struggling rural hospitals and create health care jobs.

No state that has expanded Medicaid has reversed course. Many states used the passage of their State Budget bill to expand Medicaid. [HB 966](#) does not include Medicaid expansion. I supported a motion to send the bill back to committee so Medicaid expansion could be included, but it failed on a party-line vote.

Expanding Medicaid is the single best thing we can do this session to expand health care access, make health care more affordable, address the opioid crisis, and boost rural economies. We must join 37 other states in making this happen.

2 - A Tale of Two Teacher Raises

[HB 966](#) increases teacher pay and that is a good thing. Budget writers say it is an average 4.6% increase, but there's a catch. In a highly unusual move, the pay raises do not go into effect until January 1, 2020 – rather than July 1, 2019. This means teachers have to wait six months for the raise. If you started raises at the start of the fiscal year (July 1) then the teacher raise would only be 3% because you would be using the same amount of money for raises over 12 months instead of 6 months.

Why do we need to increase teacher pay? Because we need to attract and keep the best teachers. Pay raise gimmicks like the ones in this budget do not help us attain our goal of attracting and keeping the best teachers.

Governor Cooper proposed a different way and we should adopt his approach. No more corporate tax cuts. Invest \$579 million in teacher pay raises (compared with \$341 million in the House budget) so you can give a real raise that starts July 1 that raises teacher pay 9.1% over the course of the two year budget.

3 - Limited Investments in Public School Resources

[HB 966](#) makes some investments in important areas of our public schools, but I am disappointed that it repeatedly falls short in areas that Governor Cooper recommended in his balanced budget proposal while overfunding voucher programs that divert public money to private schools. I supported amendments to transfer voucher money to textbooks, digital resources, and local public schools, but those amendments were defeated.

4 - Clean Water and Emerging Compounds

Governor Cooper's Department of Environmental Quality requested \$6 million in new funds to fight the growing problem of emerging compounds like Gen X in our drinking water. The House budget funds 1/10 of that request. I voted for an amendment to increase our investment in clean water, but it failed to pass.

5 - Missed Opportunity to Invest in Community Colleges and Workforce Development

A good way to help people earn more money and help local economies is to invest in community colleges to provide scholarships. I supported amendments to invest in Finish Line Grants to help community college students finish school and in NC GROW community college scholarships for students pursuing in-demand degrees. Both amendments were defeated and are not funded in HB 966.

6 - Tax Cuts for the Working Poor Instead of Wealthy Corporations

[HB 966](#) cuts the franchise tax that corporations pay. I supported an amendment to keep the tax the same for businesses worth more than \$250,000 and to use those funds to reinstate the state Earned Income Tax Credit that benefits low-income working families. The amendment would have meant more money in people's pockets that they in turn spend locally, but the amendment failed.

Click here to view a side-by-side comparison of Governor Cooper's budget (H588) and the House budget (H966)

Second Chances Lobby Day at the GA



Several advocates from Durham and Charlotte attending the rally on Halifax Mall



Meeting with Gemini LaDair, an Second Chances advocate from Charlotte.



I also had a chance to sit down with representatives from Mecklenburg County's "Changed Choices" group. Changed Choices works exclusively with incarcerated women, well in advance of their release by providing them with opportunities they will need to be successful once they transition back into society.

Changed Choices members from left to right: Nate Ledbetter, Melissa Mummert, Terre Lucas, Tamara Park, Nicole Thompson, Stephanie Vander Lugt

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GA Glossary

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