

## \*\*\*SPAM\*\*\* For Immediate Release



**From** Sen. Joyce Waddell <joyce.waddell@ncleg.net>  
**To** <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>  
**Reply-To** <waddelljla@ncleg.net>  
**Date** 2021-10-13 13:54



**From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate**  
Mecklenburg County

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, October 11, 2021

**CONTACT: Sen. Joyce Waddell**  
**(919) 733-5650**  
[Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net](mailto:Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net)  
<https://joycewaddell4nc.com/>



## Greetings:

*The business of the this long session at the General Assembly seems to be trickling to a close. As your Senator, I want you to always be informed of legislative happenings that concern you and the community. My office is always at your disposal and if a need arises, I will help in any way possible.*

*Joyce Waddell*

## Senator Waddell Prays

*Senator Waddell provides a prayer for our state and the county. With COVID and other maladies plaguing our great state, Senator Waddell offered to*



pray for North Carolina.



### **Highlighted Bills**

#### **SENATE BILL 695: Various Education Changes**

*SB 695 would provide the following:*

- *Exempt school administrators from certain licensure requirements.*
- *Authorize local school administrative units to use payroll deduction plans to pay ten-month employees in twelve-month installments.*
- *Change the date for reporting on student meal debt.*
- *Authorize public school units to hold State funds in local bank accounts for up to three business days after the date of drawing on the State funds before making a final disbursement to the ultimate payee.*

*This bill was passed by both houses and is now heading to the Governor's office.*

#### **HOUSE BILL 624: North Carolina Regulatory Sandbox Act**

*House Bill 624 would create a "regulatory sandbox program" under which an applicable State agency (either the Office of the Commissioner of Banks or the Department of Insurance) would be authorized to waive statutory or regulatory requirements to permit a program participant to offer an innovative financial, insurance, or emerging technology product or service to consumers for a limited time under the agency's supervision, with disclosures to the consumers that the product or service is authorized to be offered for a temporary testing period and is not endorsed or recommended by the State or the supervising agency.*

## **COVID Reinfections**

Nearly 10,700 people in North Carolina tested positive for the coronavirus over the weekend, some of them for the second time. The data, from the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, marks

the first time the state's updated case count has included people who recovered from an initial infection of coronavirus only to be infected again. Until now, the data presented on the state's COVID-19 dashboard counted someone who tested positive for COVID-19 as a single case, even if that person tested positive again months later.

DHHS changed that starting Monday to conform with the national definition of a COVID-19 case. The number of reinfections is folded into the overall case numbers and does not appear separately on the state's website. State officials said Friday that the change would increase the number of new cases reported in North Carolina. Even so, new cases continued to decline from their peak last month. The 2,219 new cases reported Monday was the fewest since early August.

Other measures also show that the summer surge of coronavirus continues to ebb. The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 on Sunday was 2,690, down from more than 3,800 a month ago. Meanwhile, the portion of positive coronavirus tests was 8.4% on Saturday, the most recent date available. That's down from as much as 14% in recent weeks and matches the average of 8.3% over the past week. Public health officials say their goal is a positive rate of 5%, the point at which the virus is thought to be contained.

The government defines a COVID-19 reinfection as a person who was infected with COVID-19, recovered, and then tested positive again at least 90 days after their initial positive test.

## **Workplace Vaccines**

Millions of workers and businesses across the state could be affected as the N.C. Department of Labor considers actions leading to a set of COVID-19 workplace standards. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced plans Sept. 9 to issue an emergency standard that would require private employers with 100 or more employees to ensure workers either get vaccinated or test negative weekly for COVID-19. The rule would impact more than 80 million workers in private-sector businesses, according to the White House. At the state level, a coalition of advocacy groups will submit a revised petition to the N.C. Department of Labor that would mandate additional COVID-19 standards for workers on farms and meat processing plants. Several of the petition's standards would apply to all private employers across the state. If the Labor Department accepts the petition, migrant workers' employers would have to comply with a rigid set of COVID-19 workplace standards, such as providing

transportation to testing sites, paid time off for employees to be tested and potential expanded housing for workers.

Other proposed standards would allow any employee in the state to refuse to work if workplace conditions are unsafe. Employers would not be able to terminate employees for the refusal. The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the N.C. Justice Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center originally filed a petition on behalf of several organizations from the N.C. Farmworker Advocacy Network in October 2020.

As of March 2020, the state Labor Department had not issued any COVID-19 workplace safety standards of its own. The department adopted OSHA's COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard for health care professionals in July, it announced, but no other standards. The NC Labor Commissioner has the power to issue a temporary emergency standard for COVID-19 workplace safety but has not done so. The director of communications for the Department of Labor, declined to answer a question on whether the commissioner thinks COVID-19 poses a workplace threat. "Once federal OSHA releases the official rule, NCDOL's Occupational Safety and Health Division will review the rule and make a determination at that point whether and/or how the rule will apply to North Carolina employers," the communications director said.

## **School Staffing**

As state leaders enter closed-door negotiations on the budget, teachers are urging them to prioritize addressing staffing shortages in schools that they say have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. "It is bad. I mean, I have never seen it like this before," said a 7th grade English teacher in Charlotte and a regional director for the North Carolina Association of Educators. School districts across the state have reported challenges in hiring for various positions, such as bus drivers, substitutes, specialty teachers and others. As other employees try to step in to fill those voids, the teacher said that has led to late school bus drop-offs and teachers trying to instruct kids in overcrowded classrooms.

"When there is still so much danger, particularly for our unvaccinated children, cramming a lot of kids into a small space is not ideal," he said. "In the middle of a really difficult time for all of us, it is not at all the experience we want our students to be having." Republicans in the General Assembly last week reached an agreement among themselves

on a budget proposal to take to the Governor. They are keeping that agreement confidential initially to see what changes the Governor will request or if he would sign off on it.

The House, Senate and the Governor all have released competing proposals this year for how to fund schools. Cooper and the House both proposed bringing pay for bus drivers and other noncertified school employees to a minimum of \$15 per hour. The House proposed average pay increases for teachers of 5.5 percent over two years, while the Senate proposed 3 percent. The Governor wants 10 percent. The amount of a raise to give teachers was one of the sticking points two years ago that led to a stalemate over the state budget.

When asked about the staffing issues in schools, House Speaker said, “Of course, we are going to make sure funding is there to fill these positions. Look, the schools are like a lot of businesses out here.”

“Not just these positions, but look at the number of employers around this region, around this state, who are begging to find folks to work,” the Speaker said, blaming recent federal stimulus programs for disincentivizing people to work. The 7th grade teacher pushed back on that, saying, “This problem has been going on for a lot longer than that. Our enrollment in educator preparation programs has been on the decline for years now.”

Hanging over all of this is a deadline a judge set of Oct. 18 for state leaders to enact the Leandro plan, a multi-billion-dollar strategy for improving schools and ensuring North Carolina meets its constitutional obligation to provide kids a “sound, basic education.” The Governor proposed fully funding the first two years of the plan, while Republicans called for funding portions of it.

“It’s not only, of course, the amount of money. We are being very strategic about where we are spending it, making sure that we are really going to try to get funds out there to help those at-risk students,” the Speaker said. “There are certain areas of this state that are higher poverty. And, in those higher-poverty areas, you have a lot of limitations for those students that you really need to focus on.”

A commission the Governor started passed a resolution last week calling for fully funding the plan, noting the unprecedented amount of unreserved cash the state has on hand and a multi-billion-dollar surplus forecast in the next two years.

## **Latino Population**

The 2020 Census showed that in the last decade, North Carolina's massive population growth — enough to earn the state a new, 14th seat in the U.S. House of Representatives — was driven by new Latino residents more than any other group. So with Latinos the biggest force behind North Carolina's recent growth, many in that community are advocating for the ongoing redistricting process at the state legislature to include them this year. They want assurances that, through the way the state's new political maps are drawn, Latino voters will have a better chance in the next decade to make their voices heard — at least in certain areas of the state where they have the largest numbers. From 2010 to 2020 North Carolina added 318,000 new Hispanic residents and 88,000 new white residents, a nearly 4 to 1 ratio. In that same period, the state also added 88,000 new Black residents, 133,000 new Asian residents and 251,000 who identify as multiracial. Although more than 10% of North Carolinians are Hispanic now, only one of the 170 state lawmakers is Hispanic, and none of the state's congressional delegation is.

A political scientist from the University of West Georgia whose research revolves around Latinos in Southern politics, said North Carolina's counties with the largest percentages of Hispanic residents — and Hispanic voters — tend to be rural, agricultural communities. Those rural places might not be the areas most likely to lead to heavily Hispanic districts that could elect Hispanic politicians.

Because all political districts must have similar populations and those rural areas are small, they will have to be combined with other nearby communities that don't necessarily have the same kind of Hispanic population. Instead, the scientist said, the most likely places to see any potential districts with a large Latino influence would be Charlotte or Durham, the two cities with the largest Hispanic populations.

*How can you be heard? You can contact any state lawmaker that represents you. There are 170 state lawmakers - 50 Senators and 120 House of Representatives members who serve at the North Carolina General Assembly. To contact them log onto [www.ncleg.gov](http://www.ncleg.gov) and click on the Senate or House tab.*

###

[Unsubscribe sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org](mailto:sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by joyce.waddell@ncleg.net powered by



Try email marketing for free today!