

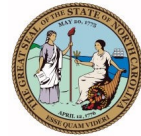
Updates



From Representative Nasif Majeed <majeedla@ncleg.net>
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Representative Nasif Majeed District 99 - Mecklenburg County



NCCGS Graduate Education Day at the NCGA





PEACE. It was Graduate Education Day in the North Carolina General Assembly. I joined Representatives Raymond Smith and Terry Garrison for a meeting with graduate students, department heads, and the Dean of the Graduate School at North Carolina A&T State University.

I am a strong supporter of graduate education at NC A&T and proud that graduate education is positively changing the lives of students, and the quality of life in North Carolina communities. “Aggie Pride!!!!”

House Democrats Announce Budget Priorities

NC House Democrats announced their State Budget priorities last week, with a focus on Public Education, Clean Water and Clean Energy, Health Care, and Public Workers. The priorities can be found in the NC Working Families Act, which you can read [here](#). I am a co-sponsor of the NC Working Families Act and here are some highlights of what is in the bill.

Investments in Public Education

Public schools are our community’s most important assets. Strong public schools give every child an opportunity to learn. They give every community an opportunity to grow and create good jobs.

How do we build strong schools? We need a good teacher in every classroom

and excellent administrators and school workers. Recruiting and retaining the best people is key.

Our proposal gives all teachers an additional 2.5% pay raise above what they are already scheduled to receive, which amounts to at least a 7.5% pay raise over the two-year budget. The starting salary for teachers rises to \$36,600 and we reduce salary plateaus for veteran teachers so we can better keep experienced teachers. Similar raises are in place for principals and assistant principals. Other school workers will receive a 5% raise or increase to \$15/hour, whichever is larger, and everyone will receive a \$500 bonus. Finally, we restore Master's Pay supplements for teachers who earn those degrees.

Addressing mental health care for our students is also critical. Our children are feeling the effects of the pandemic and violent acts like school shootings. That's why we invest \$70 million to hire:

- 672 new school counselors, social workers, and nurses; and
- 192 new school psychologists.

A final highlight is investing \$10 million to better compensate 4,000 to 5,000 early education teachers across the state to reduce turnover and make those jobs more attractive.

Investments in Health Care

Medicaid Expansion remains the single best thing we can do to make health care more affordable and to expand health care access. I'm pleased to report that Democrats in the General Assembly support the idea and that Senate Republicans, after a decade of blocking the idea, have now come around in support too.

Here are some other important health care priorities.

First, we propose investing \$39 million to reduce the Innovations Waiver wait list by 5,000 slots. What does that mean? It means that 5,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families will be able to receive long-term care and support in their homes and communities, rather than in institutions.

Second, we propose investing \$19 million in state substance abuse centers. People who struggle with substance abuse need more resources to help them treat this disease. Improving our treatments of substance abuse will save money in the long-run as we avoid the larger costs to society and to the

individual whose substance abuse issues go untreated.

Finally, we are investing \$10 million to provide competitive grants to local law enforcement for the purpose of funding permanent or contract mental health positions. We have seen too many instances where law enforcement officers are presented with a situation involving people experiencing mental illness. Having a mental health professional on the scene can help keep these situations from escalating and result in better and safer outcomes for everyone involved.

Investments in Environment, Clean Energy, and Transportation

Clean water, clean energy, making North Carolina more resilient, and taking steps forward on climate change are the hallmarks of our budget proposal. All of these needs are urgent - they cannot wait - and they should not wait when the State has the money available right now.

We propose \$1.5 billion in funding to upgrade local schools with clean energy technology. This is a win-win for schools. Local schools receive energy efficiency investments that are sorely-needed. And these investments will help bring down long-term, recurring energy costs for local schools and taxpayers.

We also propose \$500 million to begin transitioning school bus fleets into electric vehicles. These buses will be made right here at home in North Carolina. So that's a total of \$2 billion that will be spent locally in our schools, creating jobs, and saving fuel and energy costs. These investments will take an important step toward reducing emissions and combating climate change.

Clean water is another top priority in this budget, which is why we have \$27 million in new funding for the Land and Water Trust Fund to improve water quality, including military buffer restoration, improving stormwater treatment, and stream restoration. There is \$18 million for swine floodplain buyout, \$2.5 million to address emerging compounds, and \$4 million to help the Department of Environmental Quality better enforce existing clean water laws.

Finally, I want to highlight \$24 million for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for our state and local parks and \$10 million for bike and pedestrian transportation improvements that will encourage getting people out of their cars and into more active, healthy lifestyles.

Investing in Public Workers

Public workers provide critical services to all of us. Yet, too many State Budgets in recent years have done very little to invest in our workforce. With this bill, we propose to double the scheduled pay raise for state workers from 2.5% to 5%. It will include workers at our community colleges and UNC System. Recognizing the importance of these positions during the pandemic, we also have an additional 2.5% pay raise for law enforcement officers and state health care professionals.

For state retirees on fixed incomes, we propose a 3% recurring cost of living increase. For the past decade, retirees have received very few increases and have fallen behind our neighbors in South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia.

Investing in working families is not just about pay. We are also providing 12 weeks of paid family leave for state workers so moms and dads can take time off to care for their children and bond as a family. This is the kind of benefit that not only is good for families, but it will help us attract and retain good people to take public service jobs.

Governor Cooper Proclaimed June 3 as Gun Violence Awareness Day

Governor Roy Cooper proclaimed June 3 as Gun Violence Awareness Day to raise awareness and remember the lives of those lost to gun violence.

North Carolina has the 17th highest rate of gun deaths in the nation with an average of more than 1,300 gun deaths each year.

Through Governor Cooper's executive orders, North Carolina added more than 280,000 criminal convictions to the background check system. He also took executive action in 2019 that requires state agencies to take increased action on closing crime reporting gaps between state and federal agencies and expands firearm safety education.

The Governor's recommended budget proposal for FY 2022-23 budget provides \$38.7 million to enhance community and school safety statewide, includes \$5 million for violence intervention grants, \$2.5 million recurring for violence education and prevention programming for at risk and juvenile justice-involved youth, \$1 million for the purchase of gun locks and \$200,000 for a safe storage campaign and administrative costs of distribution of gun locks.

Legislators Propose Increasing Grant Funding for Menstrual Products in Schools, Removing State Sales Tax on Menstrual Products

Last week Representatives Julie von Haefen and Allison Dahle from Wake County stood with students from across the state who traveled to the General Assembly to voice their support for more funding for menstrual product grants.

Last year's State Budget allocated \$250,000 in non-recurring grant funding for schools to purchase menstrual products for students. In less than a week, the State received 134 applications from school districts and charter schools across North Carolina; the program was able to provide a total of 66 grants before the funds were exhausted. House legislators have filed [HB 1087](#) to provide more funding for the grant programs and to exempt menstrual products from sales tax.

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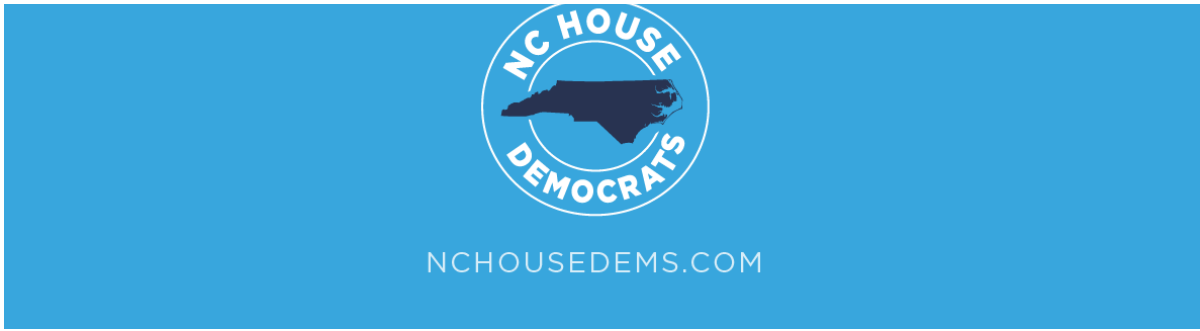


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