

State Budget Passes House



From Representative Nasif Majeed <majeedla@ncleg.net>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <majeedla@ncleg.net>
Date 2023-04-10 20:40

April 10, 2023



**Representative
Nasif Majeed**
**Serving District 99
Mecklenburg County**



State Budget Passes NC House

PEACE. The State House approved a two year spending plan for North Carolina last week on a 78-38 vote. [HB 259](#) now moves to the State Senate for its consideration. Typically, they will pass an entirely different proposal and then leadership from the House and Senate will meet to work out a "conference report" that combines the two chambers' budgets into one. That combined proposal would then go to Governor Cooper for his signature or veto.

The House Budget keeps in place planned tax cuts for corporations and accelerates individual tax cuts that largely help wealthier taxpayers. It includes badly-needed raises for state employees and teachers but the raises either barely keep pace with inflation or are actually smaller than inflation. This means we will continue to struggle with high vacancy rates in our schools and the state workforce.

The House Budget also continues a growing practice of including major changes to state law in what is supposed to be a budget document, a spending plan for the state.

House Democrats ran amendments to strengthen the pay raises, bolster public education spending, and remove bad policy provisions from the State Budget but these were largely voted down or not allowed to be offered at all. You can read all 404 pages of the [Budget bill here](#) or the 600 page plus "money report" that shows [how money is spent here](#).

Here are just a few items of interest in the State Budget.

Teacher Pay

- Reinstates Master's Pay supplements for teachers that previous GOP budgets had taken away.
- 4.25% pay raise for this fiscal year and 3.25% for next fiscal year

State Employee Pay

- 4.25% pay raise for this fiscal year and 3.25% for next fiscal year
- 1% retiree COLA in both years

Funding for "Sound, Basic Education" for All Children (Leandro case)

- Does not fully fund

Early Childhood

- No new pre-K funding
- \$10 million in new funding for Smart Start over the biennium
- Increase in child care subsidy rate

State Capital Projects

- \$1.2 billion set aside in reserves for capital projects for state agencies, the UNC System, and community colleges
- No new funding for public school capital needs other than what Lottery provides

School Safety

- \$10 million for 120 new school health positions statewide
- \$46 million in grants for local schools to make facilities safer

[Party Switch Gives Republicans NC House Supermajority](#)

Rep. Tricia Cotham of Mecklenburg County abruptly switched parties last week giving House Republicans a 72-48 supermajority. Now both the NC House and the NC Senate have GOP supermajorities giving Republicans the power to override Governor Roy Cooper's vetoes and pass state constitutional amendments if all Republicans are in agreement.

State law does not allow for state legislators to be recalled meaning the voters of heavily Democratic House District 112 will now be represented by a Republican until January 2025.

The implications of the party switch could be enormous as the General Assembly discusses the State Budget, a woman's right to an abortion, teacher and state employee pay raises, civil and voting rights, public education, public safety, and other critical issues.

[Working Families Act House](#)

Democrats introduced the Working Families Act, [HB 569](#). The bill has five main parts. Each, if passed, would help North Carolina's working families.

[Paid Family & Medical Leave](#)

The bill provides for family and medical leave for workers for the birth of a child, for serious health conditions, or to care for a loved one with a serious medical condition.

No parent should have to choose between caring for a newborn and earning a wage to pay their bills. Every family should be empowered to care for sick loved ones without fear of losing their job. Paid family and medical leave combats poverty, gives children a healthy start, and lowers the wage gap between women and men. Studies have also shown that paid leave improves worker retention, which saves employers money through reduced turnover costs.

[Housing Affordability](#)

The bill creates a Homeowners Assistance Fund to help first-time homebuyers who serve the public as teachers, fire fighters, law enforcement, rescue workers, or are military veterans. Additionally, the bill expands the existing property tax "circuit breaker" program that offers relief to homeowners facing fast-rising property tax bills.

If we want to ensure that no one is driven to foreclosure because they can't afford to pay a rising property tax bill, we need to expand access to property tax relief programs, especially for state employees, teachers, and first responders who are struggling to afford rising housing costs near their places of work.

Housing is the first rung on the ladder of opportunity, but it is out of reach for too many families. More than 1.2 million North Carolinians, in rural and urban communities alike, cannot find affordable housing.

[Child-Care Subsidy Expansion](#)

In North Carolina, as working parents earn more income, they abruptly lose access to child-care assistance when their earnings reach 85% of the state's median income. Reaching this "benefits cliff" can put a family's overall financial security at risk, even if they're bringing home more income.

By expanding eligibility for child-care assistance to families earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level, we can make sure that families have the tools they need to build wealth and remain financially secure while growing their careers. Child care affordability is a major threat to family budgets and it forces some parents to make job and career sacrifices they do not want to make.

[Child Tax Credit](#)

A Child Tax Credit in North Carolina would help people afford child care so they can work and take care of their families. The bill would reenact the tax credit eliminated in previous Republican budgets in an amount of up to \$250 per child. Studies have shown that a Child Tax Credit can strengthen families, improve a child's immediate well-being, and their long-term health and education.

[Minimum Wage Increase](#)

We don't just need more jobs, we need more jobs that boost the economy – by paying people enough to take care of their families and contribute to their

communities and local economies, and providing benefits so families aren't losing their homes because someone got sick. Unfortunately, North Carolina's minimum wage has long lagged behind what it actually takes to get by.

The bill raises the state minimum wage to \$15 over the next few years. While our current minimum wage has been stuck at \$7.25, most other states have raised theirs. According to the Living Income Standard—a market-based assessment of what it takes to make ends meet—a family with one adult and one child needs to earn \$33,700 per year (\$16 an hour) in order to afford the basics. The NC Budget and Tax Center has calculated each county's living wage standard and you can check that [information out here](#).

[Investing in North Carolina Act](#)

House Democrats introduced the Investing in North Carolina Act, HB 581. The bill has four main parts. Each, if passed, would help move North Carolina families and our state move forward.

[Child-Care System Investments](#)

Child care is the workforce behind the workforce. Parents in every industry depend on child care to be able to work and ensure their family's economic security. But early childhood educators only earn an average of \$12/hour, nearly 40% rely on public assistance, and they are more than 7 times more likely to live in poverty than public kindergarten teachers.

That's why it's so important that our state increase investments in the Child-Care WAGE\$ Program, which helps stabilize our child-care workforce by providing education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers, directors, and child-care providers.

Compensation and benefits for the early childhood workforce are necessary to attract and retain qualified teachers. Increasing funding for WAGE\$ will improve compensation, education, and retention for eligible teachers.

[Raises for State Employees and Educators](#)

State employees are the backbone of our communities. They help keep us safe, healthy, well-educated and well-connected. Despite all that state employees contribute to our community, we have failed to give them competitive salary increases for far too long, and recruitment and retention of critical public servants continues to be a challenge. Nearly a quarter of positions at North Carolina's state agencies are vacant, which means that many existing state employees are covering the responsibilities of multiple workers to keep our state running.

That's why we're proposing competitive salary increases and retention bonuses for state employees. State employees would receive a 5% raise starting July 1st of this year and an additional 3% raise on July 1, 2024. Additionally, there would be \$250 retention bonuses paid in November and April.

For teachers, we are also facing a growing crisis of vacancies in the classroom. Kids need great teachers, and if we don't start offering competitive salaries, North Carolina won't be able to recruit and retain our most talented teachers and potential teachers. That's why we're proposing a true, 16% salary increase for public school teachers over the next two years.

The raises we're proposing will put an additional \$400 a month in teachers' pockets in year one and an additional \$900 a month in year two. On average, our proposal would give teachers \$270 more a month in year one and \$470 more in year two when compared with the House budget. And it's important to note that these numbers do not reflect local salary supplements received by some educators.

Finally, our community college system provides local communities with

outstanding career and economic development opportunities, but faculty and staff have only received two small raises over the past decade. We cannot expect these institutions to continue providing quality education and workforce training if they cannot recruit and retain talented staff. That's why we're proposing 8% salary increases for community college faculty and staff.

[Retiree COLAs](#)

Legislators did not include a COLA for retirees in last year's state budget despite enough gains by the pension system's investments to pay for one. Instead, the state budget gave retirees a one-time 4% bonus. While a bonus is nice, it does little to help retirees' overall financial well-being.

In nearly twenty years, state retirees have received two very small COLAs. This is unacceptable. Retired state employees put in years of service to our state and communities. They deserve the dignity and respect of financial security in retirement.

That's why we're proposing a 2% COLA and additional one-time COLA supplements so that former state employees have the financial security they need to thrive in retirement. This is double the COLA in the bill recently passed by the State House.

[Small Business Investments](#)

We don't just need more jobs, we need more jobs that boost the economy by providing high-quality, competitive benefits to workers.

Small businesses are the engines of our local economies, and small business owners work hard to provide workers with a living wage and high-quality healthcare. Still, many struggle to offer competitive benefit plans, like paid family medical leave and paid sick leave. Since high-quality employee benefit plans can be expensive and cost-prohibitive for many small businesses, we're proposing a tax credit that would help small businesses become more competitive employers by offsetting the cost of providing benefits, like paid family medical and sick leave.

[HB 581](#) would provide tax credits to small businesses that provide high-quality benefits and give more workers the opportunity to access sick leave and care for sick family members.

[Governor Roy Cooper Proclaims April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month](#)

Last week Governor Roy Cooper proclaimed April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month to increase awareness and help address this widespread public health issue. More than half of women and nearly 1 in 3 men in the United States have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

Sexual violence is defined as any unwanted physical or verbal advances including sexual activity, abuse, harassment and assault. Sexual assault can affect people of any gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or religion.

The NC Department of Administration's Council for Women and Youth Involvement (CFWYI) helps fund 99 sexual assault programs in our state. These programs offer counseling, 24-hour crisis lines, transportation, and court and advocacy services. For additional resources, including a directory of state-funded sexual assault agencies, visit the [NC Council for Women and Youth Involvement website](#).

During the last fiscal year, more than 11,000 individuals in North Carolina sought intervention services from a CFWYI funded rape crisis center following an experience of sexual violence. Thirty-five percent of women in North

Carolina have experienced intimate partner sexual violence, but these numbers underestimate the pervasive nature of this problem in our community because many cases are unreported.

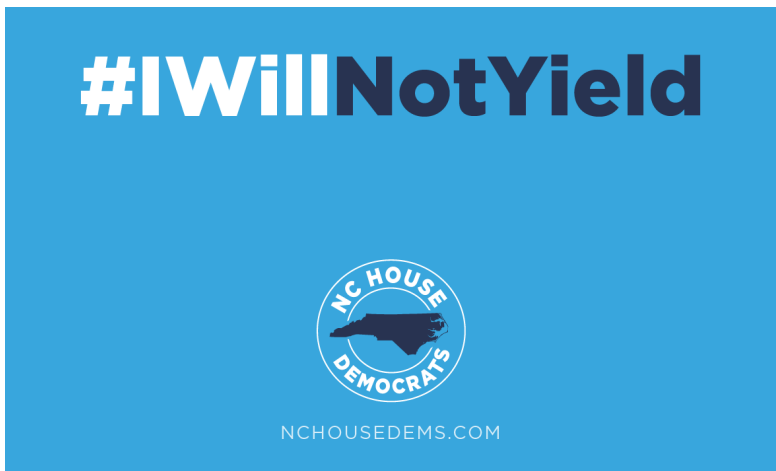
Almost 12,000 North Carolinians, including 2,824 children under the age of 18, received sexual assault services from CFWYI grantees between July 2021 and June 2022. During that same time, more than 27,000 crisis calls were received from individuals seeking support following an experience with sexual violence. Only 4.2% of victims reported being assaulted by a stranger.

Join our mailing list & Follow Me on Facebook

It's easy to join our mailing list! Just send your email address by text message:
Text **MAJEEDN** to **22828** to get started.



Visit our Website



PEACE,

Representative Nasif Majeed, District 99 | Legislative Building, 16 W. Jones Street, Room 1008, Raleigh, NC 27601

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

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

Sent by majeedla@ncleg.net powered by

