

For Immediate Release



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greetings:

Last week the General Assembly passed 5 bills in the Senate.

SB 316 Lower Healthcare Costs - an act lowering healthcare costs and increasing price transparency.

SB 311 (= SB 322) Utility Worker Protection Act - an act to increase the punishment for committing an assault against a utility or communications worker.

SB 214 Four Oaks/Creedmoor Deannexations - an act removing certain described property from the corporate limits of the Town of Four Oaks and the City of Creedmoor.

SB 122 (= HB 334) GSC Unif. Community Prop. Disp. at death act - an act to enact the uniform community property disposition at death act, as recommended by the general statutes commission.

Joyce Waddell

Charlotte City Council

Senator Waddell gives a legislative update at the District 4 City Council Town Hall meeting.



SENATE BILL 311 - Utility Worker Protection Act

Senate Bill 311 increases legal protections for utility and communications workers in North Carolina by enhancing the penalties for assaults committed against them.

Key Provisions:

- The bill amends G.S. 14-33(b) to classify an assault against a utility or communications worker as a Class 1 misdemeanor, provided the worker is:
 1. Readily identifiable (e.g., wearing a company-branded uniform, hat, or outerwear), and
 2. Discharging or attempting to discharge their official duties at the time of the assault.
- The term "utility or communications worker" includes employees, agents, or contractors of entities (public or private) that provide essential services such as:
 - Electricity
 - Natural gas
 - Liquid petroleum
 - Water and wastewater services
 - Telecommunications
 - Internet access
- This legislation aligns with similar protections already extended to other public service workers and aims to deter assaults against individuals maintaining critical infrastructure.

Senate Bill 316 - Lower Healthcare Cost

Senate Bill 316 aims to reduce healthcare costs and improve transparency in North Carolina's healthcare system. The bill addresses a broad range of reforms across hospitals, insurers, and healthcare providers to empower patients with accessible cost information and ensure fair billing practices.

Key Provisions:

1. Price Transparency in Hospitals and Surgical Facilities:

- Requires hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers to publicly report the full costs of the most common inpatient admissions, surgeries, and imaging procedures.
- Mandates quarterly data reporting using standardized electronic formats and makes this data publicly accessible through the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

2. Fair Billing and Patient Protections:

- Limits when and how facility fees can be charged to patients, especially for non-emergency outpatient services.
- Requires clear, upfront estimates ("good-faith estimates") for shoppable services and caps final bills to within 5% of those estimates.
- Strengthens fair collection practices by prohibiting sending unpaid bills to collections without providing patients with an itemized, understandable bill.

3. Billing Notice Requirements:

- Mandates written disclosures when services may be rendered by out-of-network providers, giving patients notice of potential additional charges and reduced protections.

4. Oversight and Enforcement:

- Empowers the Department of Health and Human Services to fine noncompliant providers and facilities.
- Authorizes the State Auditor to conduct periodic reviews of pricing practices and transparency among state-funded health service facilities.

This legislation seeks to lower healthcare costs, expand access, and give patients greater control over healthcare decisions by demanding transparency, fair billing, and accountability from providers and insurers.



Mecklenburg Delegation

*Senator Waddell as the
Chairperson of the
Mecklenburg Delegation, hosts
NC DOT and others to receive
an update on I-77 and other
Mecklenburg transportation
projects.*



NC General Assembly

Visit www.ncleg.gov, the official website of the North Carolina General Assembly. Use this website as a tool to track bills, find and communicate with your state representatives, as well as follow chamber activity, meetings and issues before the General Assembly.

You can view bills in full by visiting www.ncleg.gov.

Please don't forget to consider getting vaccinated. There are viruses and other illnesses plaguing our community that can be prevented by vaccines and proper handwashing.



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