On Saturday, the North Carolina General Assembly unanimously passed COVID-19 relief and recovery bill that spends and reserves nearly $1.6 billion.

The compromise spending plan is a significant investment laying the groundwork for moving the state forward and responding to the economic and human impacts of this pandemic. This commitment goes above and beyond previous requests and includes funding for testing, tracing, immediate recovery needs, and increasing access to broadband and electronic devices to access remote learning opportunities.

I believe this legislation puts North Carolina on the right path to recovery. For weeks, our citizens have been anxious about their future because of this virus, and now we can assure them that action is being taken to allay their concerns.

The bill addresses both immediate needs, like purchasing personal protective equipment and expanding digital infrastructure needs, and long-term research and development to fight the virus. It supports testing for uninsured patients, rural and under-served communities, and behavioral health services.

This recovery and relief bill is the product of bipartisan collaboration to help North Carolinians return to their daily lives. Our citizens have stepped up to support each
during this unprecedented time, and now we must look ahead to getting everyone healthy and back to work safely.

**Appropriations include:**

- $75 million for school nutrition
- $1 million for the Department of Public Instruction to improve internet connectivity for students through the use of mobile Wi-Fi hotspots on buses
- $11 million for the Department of Public Instruction to improve internet connectivity for students by providing internet access devices
- $30 million for electronic devices for schools to purchase devices for students in response to COVID-19
- $5 million for electronic devices for school staff in response to COVID-19
- $4.5 million for cybersecurity
- $10 million for student health programs
- $70 million for summer learning programs
- $1.48 million for enhancing the state’s learning management platform
- $3 million for non-digital learning instructional resources
- $15 million for exception children programs
- $660,029 for residential schools
- $5 million for the Department Public Instruction’s Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports (ELISS) Grants
- $25 million for the Community College System to respond to COVID-19 impacts
- $44.4 million for the UNC System to respond to COVID-19 impacts
- $20 million for independent and private colleges to respond to COVID-19 impacts
- $85.1 million for COVID-19 research, including $29 million for the UNC Collaboratory, $20 million for Wake Forest University Health Services, $15 million for Duke University’s Human Vaccine Institute, $15 million to the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, $6 million to the Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine
- $25 million for testing, tracing, and trends related to COVID-19
- $20 million for additional public health capacity, including increasing nursing capacity, number of community health workers, telehealth services and providing infection control support and training in nursing homes and adult care homes
• $20 million for enhanced behavioral health and crisis services to respond to COVID-19, including diverting individuals experiencing behavioral health emergencies from emergency departments
• $50 million for purchasing additional PPE
• $19 million for food, safety, shelter and child care
• $6 million for food banks
• $2.25 million for foster care support
• $25 million for facilities that serve Special Assistance recipients
• $50 million for rural and under-served communities
• $65 million for rural hospital support
• $5 million for free and charitable clinics
• $1.5 million for NC MedAssist
• $15 million for the Teaching Hospitals Relief Fund
• $15 million for the General Hospital Relief Fund
• $300 million for the DOT Coronavirus Relief Fund, if allowed by the federal government
• $150 million for local government grants to support immediate COVID-19 needs
• $150 million for the Local Government Coronavirus Relief Reserve, if allowed by the federal government
• $20 million to support fee-supported state operations, if allowed by the federal government
• $70 million for continuity of government operation needs, including covering overtimes costs, purchasing PPE, sanitation and hygienic supplies, and critical information technology equipment
• $15 million for animal depopulation and disposal
• $125 million for small business loans through Golden LEAF
• $290,000 for the LINKS program
• $5 million for the Association of Community Health Centers
• $5 million for Visit NC marketing
• $1.8 million for the Old North State Medical Society
• $9 million for the GREAT program to expand access to broadband internet

I was proud to be a Primary Sponsor of the House Bill (H1043) and was very pleased that it passed 120-0 in the House on the Concurrence Vote.
After the vote, I made the following statement:

“House Democrats support today’s bills to help North Carolina battle the COVID-19 disease and help our workers and small businesses with the damage caused by the disease. There is much more work to do, particularly with protecting front-line workers, strengthening the unemployment safety net, broadband investment, and expanding health care coverage and lowering health care costs for all North Carolinians.”

This week I also introduced a new Worker’s Compensation Bill to protect our first responders, health care, and other essential workers who have continued to risk exposure to COVID-19 by showing up to work every day. H 1057 is bi-partisan bill with 56 co-sponsors which I will update you on the progress in the weeks to come.

**Governor Cooper Shares Path Forward for North Carolina**

Governor Roy Cooper has charted a path forward for eventually easing certain COVID-19 restrictions while still protecting North Carolinians from a dangerous second wave of the virus. This easing of restrictions could start as early as Friday, May 8th.

Expert modeling has shown it would be dangerous to lift the restrictions all at once because it would increase the chances that hospitals become overwhelmed and unable to care for severely ill patients. Cooper emphasized that changes in restrictions must protect public health, especially those who are most vulnerable to severe illness, including people over age 65, those with underlying health conditions and people living in congregate settings.

In order to ease restrictions, the state needs to make more progress in three areas: testing, tracing and trends.
TESTING

State planning relies on an increase in testing capabilities to identify, isolate and track new cases of COVID-19. This means having the supplies and lab capacity to do more testing across the state. Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, has brought together laboratory partners from the public and private sector to coordinate efforts to ensure testing – diagnostic and antibody - is widely available across the state while also conserving protective equipment.

TRACING

Tracing requires the state to boost the public health workforce and ability to trace contacts of new cases of COVID-19. Contact tracing can be effective at containing new outbreaks, but it requires more personnel. When a person tests positive, the tracing efforts will help identify who that individual may have been in contact with so those people can get tested and take the right precautions. NC DHHS is working with its partners to increase this critical piece of our public health workforce. New digital tools can also help scale this effort.

TRENDS

In order to ease restrictions, the state needs to understand how COVID-19 is impacting the state and impacting specific populations and regions of the state to determine when to strengthen or ease social distancing policies. Trends that will influence policy decisions will be based on data like the new positive cases, hospitalizations, deaths, as well as available supply of personal protective equipment, hospital capacity.
COVID-19 Updates: Staying Informed & Prepared

Text COVIDNC to 898211 to receive general information and updates about COVID-19 and North Carolina's response.

Dial 2-1-1 provides free, confidential information and is available 24 hours a day to help you find resources within your community. They can connect you with people and groups that can help with questions about access to food, shelter, health care, employment and child care.

Families who need food assistance for their children can text FOODNC to 877-877 to find free meal sites in their communities.

Optum has a toll-free 24-hour Emotional Support Help Line at 866-342-6892 for people who may be experiencing anxiety or stress due to Coronavirus

Health Care Volunteers Needed

A crucial part of supporting our health care system includes recruiting volunteers to supplement our health care workforce. North Carolina is asking for your help to meet these needs. This response is provided through the State Medical Response System (SMRS), which recruits and manages volunteers in the following areas:

- Clinical (physicians, advanced care providers, nurses, EMS)
- Clinical Support (pharmacy, imaging and respiratory care)
- Non-clinical support (facility maintenance, safety, and administrative)

If you can volunteer please register here.
COVID-19 Information from Across State Government

For a great list of state resources in one place, visit: https://www.nc.gov/covid19.

It has links to:

- Unemployment Information
- Help for Small Businesses
- Child Care Help
- N.C. Health & Human Services
- Español: Recursos e Información

Other News

Finding Home: During A Pandemic, Past-Due Rent And Evictions Loom
WFAE

Amid Pandemic, Business Optimism Plummets But Long-Term Signs Are Hopeful
WUNC

Four things North Carolina’s coronavirus data tells us — and what it doesn’t.
North Carolina Health News

New Island Replaces Old One Off North Carolina Coast
Public Radio East

Democratic candidates in WNC call for immediate Medicaid expansion
Smoky Mountain News

Other Ways You Can Help

1) Donate blood. There is a critical need for blood donation. I gave two weeks ago, and it was pretty fast and very easy. I even answered most of the pre-donation questions online before going. Find a place to donate in our community:
   - American Red Cross
2) Support our local food bank. An unprecedented surge of people out of work means an unprecedented surge in demand for food donations. Support these local efforts:

- Inter-Faith Food Shuttle.  [https://www.foodshuttle.org](https://www.foodshuttle.org)
- Oak City Cares.  [https://oakcitycares.org/covid-19-agency-update/](https://oakcitycares.org/covid-19-agency-update/)
- Zebulon Methodist and Wakefield Baptist have joined to provide meals in the evenings. Canned goods and pastas, mac and cheese boxes, oatmeal packets, pasta sauces, canned or dried beans... They are working with a non-profit called Share His Glory. If anyone would like to make a donation by check, they can write it to Share His Glory. Shannon Baxter is the contact and her # is 919-665-5038.

**Contact Me**

My office is Room 506 of the Legislative Office Building and my office phone number is 733-5974. **DUE TO THE STAY AT HOME ORDER, WE ARE NOT CURRENTLY IN THE OFFICE. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO STILL CALL OR EMAIL.** Angela and I are working to answer your every question. My email address is darren.jackson@ncleg.net. I look forward to hearing from and working with you. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve. As always, please feel free to contact my office if you have any questions or concerns.

Please consider following me on Facebook and Twitter:

![Facebook Icon](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

![Twitter Icon](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

---

**Note: You are receiving this newsletter because you have either provided me with your email address or sent my office an email over the last several months. ** If you do not wish to receive future eNewsletters, please [click here].**