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**Additional COVID-19 Relief Bill Passes**

The General Assembly approved its final round of COVID-19 relief of the year this week ([HB 1105](#)), unless additional funding is appropriated by the federal government. I will summarize what is good in the bill, what is bad in the bill, and what should have been included but was left out.

**The Good**

- \$50 increase in weekly unemployment insurance compensation (more on this in the “What’s Missing” section)
- \$335 tax credit for families with children
- \$52 million in funding for public schools (more on this in the “What’s Missing” section)
- \$30 million in additional grants to expand high-speed Internet access
- \$20 million in funding to stabilize operations at North Carolina museums, zoos, and other cultural attractions
- \$6 million in direct assistance to food banks and nutritional programs
- \$14 million for personal protective equipment (PPE)
- \$13 million in assistance to farmers
- \$13 million in funding for the UNC System
- \$5 million in funding for community colleges
- \$41 million for early childhood services
- \$38 million for mental health services
- \$59 million to expand COVID-19 testing and contact tracing
- \$23 million for aging adult services
- \$3.5 million for small business grants (More on this in the “What’s Missing” section)

## The Bad

- In a bill that is supposed to deal with the many challenges posed by COVID-19, we fund and expand private school vouchers.
- Pork projects. Millions of dollars are diverted away from COVID-19 relief to legislative leaders and their key allies.
- HB 1105 was drafted in backrooms by a few GOP leaders with no input from the public, Democratic legislators, or Governor Cooper. GOP leadership prevented lawmakers from offering any amendments to the bill. That's not how representative democracy should work.

## What's Missing

- Medicaid Expansion. Medicaid Expansion means billions of dollars come to NC from the federal government. We use that money to expand health care access and create health care jobs and infrastructure. That sounds like a pretty good idea anytime, but particularly during a global pandemic and recession. It's now a decade and counting of failing to expand Medicaid, costing us lost jobs, lost lives, and lost investment.
- Pay increases or bonuses for teachers and public-school employees. HB 1105 does \$0 for public employees. Governor Cooper's proposal included \$2000 for teachers and principals, \$1000 for other public-school employees, and \$1500 for community college and university employees.
- Significant investment in public schools needed to satisfy our state constitutional guarantee of a sound public education to all students as required by recent court orders.
- Assistance to small businesses most impacted by COVID-19, such as restaurants, bars, gyms, etc.
- Fixing the long-term problem that NC's unemployment system is the worst in the country for unemployed workers.
- Significant assistance to local governments.

Although there are some very good things in HB 1105, I voted No because of the many opportunities we missed. An extraordinary crisis like COVID-19 requires a better response and I remain committed to working however long it takes to strengthen North Carolina's recovery.

[General Assembly approves \\$1B federal virus relief package](#)

WRAL

[NC virus relief aid heads to Cooper as General Assembly ends](#)

WLOS

[Cooper says COVID-19 bill doesn't do enough for North Carolinians in need, should expand Medicaid](#)

CBS-17

[Opinion: More flawed, "our way or the highway" governance at the General Assembly](#)  
NC Policy Watch

### **Governor Cooper Announces North Carolina Will Move to Phase 2.5**

North Carolina has now entered Phase 2.5. After a summer of hard work by North Carolinians practicing prevention measures, this is a modest step forward to ease some restrictions. Mask requirements will remain in effect.

Under Phase 2.5:

- Mass gathering capacity will increase to 25 people indoors and 50 people outdoors and large event spaces remain subject to the mass gathering limits.
- Playgrounds can open.
- Museums and aquariums may open at 50% capacity.
- Gyms and indoor exercise facilities, such as yoga studios, martial arts, and rock climbing, as well as skating rinks, bowling alleys, indoor basketball, volleyball etc., may open at 30% capacity.
- Bars, nightclubs, movie theaters, indoor entertainment facilities, amusement parks, and dance halls will remain closed.
- Large venues remain subject to the mass gathering limits.

Also, NC Department of Health and Human Services issued an order allowing outdoor visitation at nursing homes or skilled nursing facilities. Effective through September 22, 2020, the Order outlines standards and requirements these facilities must meet to participate.

Read the [Executive Order](#) and the [FAQs](#) for more information.

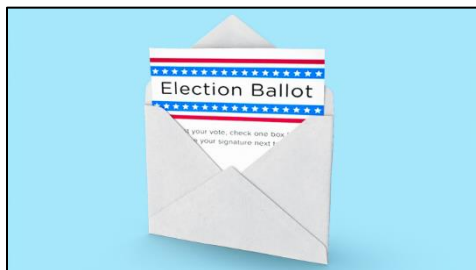
Read the [Press Release](#).

### **Child Care Hotline Extended to Families Seeking Child Care for School-Age Children**

North Carolina families in need of childcare can call the child care hotline 1-888-600-1685 to be connected with child care options in their communities for school-age children up to age 12.

The hotline is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Licensed child care professionals meeting the NCDHHS health and safety guidelines are available to provide care through this service. For more information about child care during COVID-19, visit [covid19.ncdhhs.gov/information/child-care/child-care-information-families](https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/information/child-care/child-care-information-families).

## **Request a Ballot**



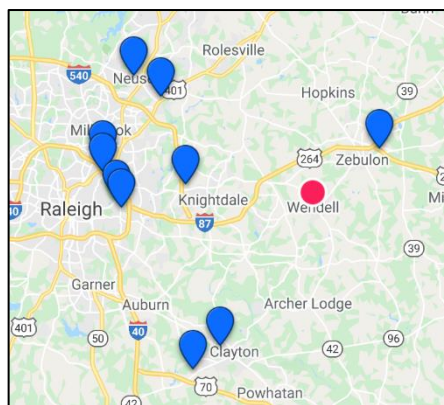
Registered voters may request a ballot through the online [Absentee Ballot Request Portal](#), or download and fill out the [North Carolina Absentee Ballot Request Form](#). The form is also available at your county board of elections office.

After completing the request form, you may return it to your [county board of elections](#) by fax, email, mail, or in person. The request form comes with detailed instructions and is [available in Spanish](#).

## **Free Community Testing Around NC**

For an up-to-date list of events, visit the [Community Testing Events](#) page. People who may not currently have symptoms but may have been exposed to COVID-19 should get tested, especially people from historically marginalized communities.

If someone tests positive for COVID-19, the COVID-19 Community Team will reach out to connect them with needed resources. People should answer when the Community Team reaches out, via phone, text from 45394, or email from [NC-ARIAS-NoReply@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:NC-ARIAS-NoReply@dhhs.nc.gov) with further instructions.



Find a nearby testing site [Find My Testing Place](#).

[New program provides no-cost COVID-19 testing for the uninsured](#)  
WECT



## **Completing the Census is Safe, Easy and Important!**

Completing the survey is quick and easy to do. You can complete your Census questionnaire online, by phone or on paper.

The process is safe, easy and important and you can respond in one of three ways:

- Online by visiting [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov).
- By phone by calling 1-800-923-8282.
- Via [mail](#).

Help Make NC Count! View and download resource materials by checking out the [NC Census Outreach & Engagement Toolkit](#).

You can also track Census response rates near you. View the [latest data here](#).

[More Than Four Million NC Residents Have Yet To Fill Out Their 2020 Census Forms](#)  
WUNC

[NC's current 2020 Census response is concerning](#)  
EdNC

### **The Passing of Representative Melanie Wade Goodwin**

I was heartbroken last week at the news of the death of my good friend, Melanie Wade Goodwin. We served together in the House, she was my first seatmate and mentor, and she was a constant source of friendship and inspiration. We have remained friends since her retirement from the House and always had the best lunch chats catching up on our families, jobs and of course the most recent political events. Melanie never minded a good fight and always had the interests of the least powerful and most vulnerable in her heart. While she struggled with cancer, its effects and her seemingly never-ending treatments for the last 10+ years of her life, she never stopped fighting. Never. Her battle should serve as an inspiration for us all to live life to its fullest every day.



Please keep her husband Wayne, children Madison and Jackson, her parents, and all of her many friends in your prayers.

### **Other News**

[\\$300 federal boost hits NC unemployment checks](#)  
WRAL

[North Carolina Census Participation Lags Behind Other States, with Four Weeks Left in Count](#)  
Spectrum News

[The first COVID surge weakened NC's cash-strapped rural hospitals. A second wave may devastate them.](#)  
NC Health News

[Duke Energy Asks Regulators To Let it Charge Customers For Coal Ash Costs](#)  
WFAE

[FEMA approves lost wages assistance for N.C.](#)  
WCTI

## **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](mailto: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.

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