



North Carolina Department of Public Safety

Prevent. Protect. Prepare.

Roy Cooper, Governor

Erik A. Hooks, Secretary

TO: Kristi Jones
Chief of Staff, Governor Roy Cooper

FROM: Erik A. Hooks, Secretary
North Carolina Department of Public Safety

DATE: June 24, 2017

SUBJECT: Department of Public Safety's Concerns Regarding SB 257,
Appropriations Act of 2017

After reviewing SB 257, Appropriations Act of 2017, I am writing to express the North Carolina Department of Public Safety's concerns regarding the lack of funding for priorities identified by the department and the Governor. The failure to appropriately fund the following programs will negatively impact the Department's mission to protect the public, save lives and reduce crime:

I. Enhancing Public Safety through Emergency Management Programs

Statewide Search and Rescue Teams

\$2,000,000 R

The Governor's budget included funding to train and equip Search and Rescue (SAR) teams located in Buncombe, Guilford, Mecklenburg, Wake, Pitt, Cumberland and New Hanover counties. These teams provide specialized search and rescue response actions during regional and statewide disaster events.

North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) is tasked with managing the Statewide SAR Program. SAR assets are used daily in normal operations with minor flooding, helicopter extractions, wilderness rescues, etc. SAR assets were also critical during Hurricane Matthew response operations where resources from these seven teams performed over 2000 rescues.

Funding to support this program typically has come from the State Homeland Security Grant. The federal government will not continue to sustain these resources. Thus, North Carolina must make an investment in order to keep this important program operational.

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School Risk and Response Management Systems

\$225,000 R FTE 2

\$300,000 NR

The Governor's budget provided funding to support the legislatively required (SL 2015-241) School Risk Management System.

In 2015, NCEM was statutorily tasked with creating a School Risk Management System that: (1) Provides a standardized All-Hazards Disaster Plan Template for all public schools; (2) Provides a response application that allows law enforcement to pull up a digital floor map of all public schools on the mobile data terminal in their vehicles; and (3) Provides a panic alarm application for school teachers and administrators to notify first responders of emergencies.

NCEM has collected the digital floor maps and is working with all of the school systems to finalize disaster plans. NCEM is also working with the NC Department of Information Technology to provide the State Highway Patrol with password access to the digital floor maps. This funding will continue these efforts to ensure that North Carolina is prepared to sustain a high level of emergency preparedness and safety for our public schools

II. Enhancing Pubic Safety through Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice Programs

Prisons Safety and Security Operations--Intelligence Gathering Capabilities

\$408,464 R FTE 7

The department requested and the Governor allocated funds in his budget to maintain seven positions that provide security and intelligence gathering by monitoring inmate telephone calls for possible criminal activity. This program is an essential component of our plan for improving safety and security in prison facilities, as well as in the community.

These positions work with analysts in the Adult Correction Special Operations-Intelligence Section to gather intelligence regarding ongoing criminal enterprises involving the inmate population within prisons; contraband movement; illegal drug operations; connections back to community criminal pursuits; gang activities; and, threats to correctional officers, probation officers, and other judicial system officials.

These receipt-supported intelligence positions are currently funded through the inmate welfare fund. However, as a result of changes made by the Federal Communications Commission concerning inmate telephone provider rates in 2016, the inmate welfare fund is anticipated to have a negative cash flow in 2017-18 and to be depleted in 2018-19.

Constitutionally Mandated Community Standard of Medical Care--Temporary Nursing Services

\$14,759,413 R FTE196

The budget bill replaces 196 full-time nursing positions with travel nurses. While travel nurses are currently used to augment staffing needs on a short-term basis, they are not a substitute for full-time employees who have a long-term commitment to the agency. Full-time employees provide quality patient care and are more familiar with prison security issues and policies. Due to short-term contracts, usually 13 weeks, travel nurses typically never attain full training and acclimation to prisons' operations. This creates a safety concern and ineffective continuity of care for the patient. Additionally, permanent staff resources are taxed by the constant need to train new nurses on prison policies.

Establish a Long-Term Care Unit at Central Prison

\$1,739,001 R FTE 44

\$2,312,718 R FTE 44

Funding was provided in the Governor's budget for staffing and operational costs to institute a long-term palliative care unit at Central Prison. Due to the aging inmate population, the demand for, and cost of, long-term palliative care has increased exponentially in recent years. The department currently maintains a contract at a private facility for palliative care beds. In addition, sixty hospital beds at Central Prison Health Care Facility (CPHCF) are occupied by inmates needing long-term care. As a result, other inmates needing short-term hospitalization are sent to local medical care facilities. Inmates at local facilities must be accompanied by correctional officers, thus impacting cost of care and staffing patterns at prison facilities.

A long-term palliative care facility will increase the availability of the CPHCF beds and reduce the cost and custody security risks of using outside medical care facilities for short-term medical needs. In addition, the current contract with a private facility for long-term care could be eliminated, thereby achieving costs savings.

Re-entry--Expand Behavioral Health Treatment Services

\$5,528,914 R FTE 97

\$12,655,805 FTE 156

The Governor's budget allocated funding to provide services for mentally ill offenders and to improve coordination of pre-release planning which decreases the likelihood of post-release mental health challenges.

Re-entry--Fund Local Re-entry Councils

\$1,505,000 R

\$2,205,000 R

With a goal of reducing recidivism, the Governor provided funding in his budget to support and create local re-entry councils. These councils are critical to provide service coordination and assistance networks for adult offenders upon re-entry into society. These services are proven to reduce recidivism.

Preventing Juvenile Crime

\$2,000,000 R

The Governor's budget included Juvenile Crime Prevention Council funding to expand capacity to provide evidence-based strategic intervention and programs to reduce delinquent behavior.

These Programs are critical to the full and effective implementation of the Raise the Age initiative. These programs are designed to change delinquent and problem behavior and they are far less expensive and more effective than confinement.

III. Impact from Attorney General Office Cuts

The impact of cutting more than 120 attorney positions within the Attorney General's Office will have significant ramifications to legal representation of the department. Currently, the AG's Office is representing the department in more than 1,500 tort claims and over 380 workers' comp claims before the Industrial Commission. These cases are in various stages of litigation from motion pleadings to impending trials. In addition, the AG's Office also provides representation in state and federal court, and the Office of Administrative Hearings. The full impact of these cuts is not yet known, but will be significant.

Funding of these items is critical to the Department of Public Safety's ability to successfully fulfill our mission to improve the quality of life for North Carolinians by reducing crime and enhancing public safety. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.