

NEW HANOVER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MEDICAID EXPANSION

WHEREAS, an estimated 13 percent of adults and four percent of children in New Hanover County have no health insurance, including through Medicaid, while an estimated 17 percent of residents live at or below the poverty line; and

WHEREAS, a state supported expansion of Medicaid for people not eligible for employer-provided health insurance or subsidies through the health exchange would be the most immediate path to providing access to coverage for the uninsured; and

WHEREAS, expanding Medicaid would assist New Hanover County with addressing the opioid crisis, which has had a devastating impact on New Hanover County; and

WHEREAS, expanding Medicaid would free up more hospital funds to assist the estimated 49 percent of state residents who end up in emergency rooms because of an overdose but have no insurance coverage, including through Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, expanding Medicaid would have a positive impact on the economy, creating tens of thousands of jobs statewide; and

WHEREAS, members of the N.C. General Assembly and Governor Roy Cooper have proposed expanding Medicaid in the 2019 legislative session.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners supports Medicaid expansion during the 2019 legislative session.


ADOPTED this the 18th day of March, 2019.



NEW HANOVER COUNTY


Jonathan Barfield, Jr., Chairman

ATTEST:


Kymberleigh G. Crowell, Clerk to the Board



*Greenville-Pitt County
Chamber of Commerce*

2019

LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES





Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce

2019 Legislative Priorities

Strategic Economic Growth • Business Success • Community Development

The Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce requests that the General Assembly address the following issues during the 2019 Legislative Session:

Transportation & Infrastructure-

- Prioritize and fund the completion of the I-587 spur in Greene, Nash, Pitt, and Wilson counties;
- Identify and fund legislation that facilitates increased preparation of stormwater and river systems for future storm impact;
- Adopt and allocate airport capital funding based on the recently proposed NCDOT Division of Aviation funding formula.

Education and Workforce Development-

- Fully fund the planning and design phases for a modern, properly equipped medical education and research facility for the Brody School of Medicine at ECU;
- Allocate funding for innovative, short duration community college programs which lead to industry recognized credentials and highly employable students;
- Protect historical base funding for PCC and ECU as they continue to adapt to the changing enrollment trends of the 21st century student body.

Healthcare-

- Identify and pass a common sense, cost efficient solution to the close the healthcare coverage gap in North Carolina;
- Align state insurance regulations with recently adopted federal rules surrounding Association Health Plans;
- Support Project Unify, which integrates Vidant Medical Group and ECU Physicians into a more cohesive and efficient system.

Early Childhood Education-

- Adequately fund early childhood programs so that providers are reimbursed at full market delivery rates;
- Allocate additional funding to the Child Care Subsidy as a means of addressing backlog of eligible, low-income participants not being served by the program.

Taxation-

- Maintain North Carolina's business-friendly environment by protecting the state's stable tax sources without disproportionately burdening particular industries, individuals, or employers;
- Replace the current nonprofit sales tax refund system with a sales tax exemption, thereby eliminating unnecessary administrative burdens.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Eastern North Carolina's infrastructure is the foundation upon which our economy, competitiveness, and quality of life depends. Therefore, the Chamber supports sustaining and enhancing the area's infrastructure in a way that maximizes the return on investment through a simultaneous balance of current infrastructure renewal and future innovations. Specifically, the Chamber believes that the items below represent the most pressing needs in eastern North Carolina:

- Prioritize Investment in Transportation: In order to ensure the safety of citizenry and attract investment in economy of eastern North Carolina, it is imperative that the General Assembly, working in conjunction with the NCDOT and Greenville-Urban Area MPO, prioritize and fund the completion of the I-587 spur.
- Mitigate Future Storm Impacts: The destruction rendered by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence are unfortunate reminders of the natural threats facing eastern North Carolina. As such, the General Assembly charged the Select Committee on Natural Disasters to explore all means necessary in preparing our stormwater and river systems for the future impacts from increasingly powerful natural disasters. Recognizing that this body spent over a year working in conjunction with state and federal agencies as well as industry experts, the Chamber is confident that the findings of this report will be in the best interest of eastern North Carolinians and therefore *tentatively* supports the implementation of the committee's findings.
- Update the Funding Strategy for NC Airports- The challenges facing the Pitt-Greenville Airport are not unique and are shared by many of its peers. Increasing fixed costs and infrastructure renewals often vastly outweigh nominal increases in airport revenues. To offset the unique capital expenses associated with airport facilities, the General Assembly should adopt and allocate funding based on the recently proposed NCDOT Division of Aviation (DOA) funding formula. This formula bases funding recommendations on economic impact, as reported in DoA's biennial economic impact study, but also includes a leveling mechanism to ensure an equitable distribution between all airports in the state.

Education and Workforce Development

In order to ensure strong, sustainable, and balanced economic growth in eastern North Carolina, state policy makers must ensure that the workforce is skilled, highly trained, and educated for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow. To create this workforce and grow our economy, our public and higher educational institutions require modernized facilities and consistent levels of operational and programmatic funding.

The Chamber Requests that the General Assembly of North Carolina consider legislation that will:

- Fully Fund Planning for a New Medical Education Building at ECU - The 40-year-old Brody medical education building has substantial deferred maintenance needs, is outdated and not configured for 21st century, state-of-the-art medical education and research. The outdated facility negatively impacts the ability to recruit and retain physicians, faculty, and researchers. The General Assembly and UNC Board of Governors should fully commit to funding the planning and design phases for a modern, properly equipped medical education and research facility at ECU.
- Fund Innovative Workforce Education Programs: As eastern North Carolina's economy continues to improve, it is increasingly important to cultivate talent by improving our workforce education system, strengthening training and retention programs, creating clear pathways to available jobs, and better equipping workers with the proper skills. All these factors are addressed through innovative workforce education programs developed collaboratively between our education institutions and the private sector. The General Assembly should seek to fund these innovative, short duration programs that lead to industry recognized credentials and highly employable students. Additionally, these funded programs should be evaluated against robust outcomes that demonstrate positive impacts on the local economy and high ROI of taxpayer dollars.
- Protect ECU and PCC Base Funding- Pitt County is fortunate to have two highly exceptional higher education institutions within its borders. However, regardless of exceptionality, our higher education institutions are under constant financial scrutiny and face significant budget fluctuations due to the state's current funding models. The Chamber believes that all efforts should be made to protect historical base funding for our area institutions as they continue to adapt to the changing demographics and norms of the 21st century student body. If the outcomes of the funding formulas result in cuts, these cuts should be limited to a maximum of no more than 1% in order to protect critical student and academic program fidelity.

Healthcare

Healthcare policies must strike a balance between supporting this cornerstone industry and ensuring that world class care is accessible and affordable for all residents of eastern North Carolina. Policymakers should work to ensure quality care is affordable for the state, business, and individuals while also reducing costs. Therefore, the Chamber requests that the General Assembly work to:

- Close the Coverage Gap- An effective and sustainable Medicaid program is essential due to Medicaid's role as a critical payment source for medical services for North Carolina's vulnerable populations. The General Assembly should seek to identify a common sense solution to the close the coverage gap. This solution should balance the overwhelming needs of expanding access while also maintaining a cost efficient expansion of Medicaid in North Carolina.
- Amend Insurance Regulations for Association Health Plans (AHP) - Although 99% of US firms are considered small businesses, the vast majority of small businesses struggle to find affordable health insurance for their employees. The General Assembly should work to align state insurance regulations with recently adopted federal rules surrounding Association Health Plans in order to allow associations of common small businesses to pool their healthcare coverage options.

Early Childhood Education

Numerous studies have shown that the first five years are especially crucial for physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development in children. These studies reinforce the knowledge that a robust, high-performing early childhood education system is a critical long-term economic investment in the future workforce and a precursor to future academic success. Additionally, by utilizing programs like the Child Care Subsidy and NC Pre-K, parents of small children can return to the workforce and/or continue their education, which works to further grow the economic base of eastern North Carolina. Therefore, the General Assembly should make it a priority to:

- Fully Reimburse Childcare Providers: In 2017, an NC State report noted that, on average, only 72% of private provider direct service costs are reimbursed by the DCDEE. Therefore, to encourage additional private childcare center participation in NC Pre-K and Child Care Subsidy programs, the General Assembly should appropriate funding necessary to provide reimbursement at full market delivery rates.
- Increase Child Care Subsidy Funding: According to recent estimates by the DCDEE, only 15% of Pitt County children eligible for the Child Care Subsidy are currently receiving benefits. Instead, nearly 7,500 eligible children are not receiving subsidized childcare assistance, which places additional financial burdens on at-risk families. The General Assembly should allocate additional funding to the Child Care Subsidy as a means of addressing this backlog of eligible, low-income participants not being served by the program

Taxation

In our global economy, states' stiffest competition for business often comes from other states. North Carolina benefits most from a fair and equitable tax policy that encourages entrepreneurship and business growth. These policies should include a clear tax and employment laws and regulations that do not add unnecessary costs or administrative burdens.

- Business Friendly Environment: Over recent years, the General Assembly has worked to increase the business environment of North Carolina. In the 2015 Tax Foundation State Business Tax Climate Index, North Carolina catapulted from 41st place to 12th, in what the Tax Foundation called "the most dramatic improvement in the Index's history." The General Assembly should continue the trend in increasing the state's competitiveness by, maintaining North Carolina's business-friendly environment by protecting the state's stable tax sources without disproportionately burdening particular industries, individuals, or employers.
- Nonprofit Sales Tax Exemption: Under current law, nonprofits in North Carolina pay sales and use tax on their purchases and then must apply for semi-annual refunds of these taxes. This refund process adds needless recordkeeping and reporting burdens for both nonprofit organizations and the county tax offices. By replacing the current system with a more traditional sales tax exemption, nonprofits and counties would save time and reduce administrative burdens. The General Assembly should pass legislation to replace the current nonprofit sales tax refund system with nonprofit sales tax exemption.



2019 Legislative Priorities

The voice of business for Eastern North Carolina

Our Chambers consider the following items the highest priorities for 2019:

Community Colleges: NCEAC requests investments in workforce training, including a start-up fund for new programs for local industry.

Address Transportation Needs: NCEA urges the General Assembly to address transportation plans that enhance the safety of area travelers while also serving to promote and enhance growth in Eastern North Carolina. We support DOT efforts to ensure new roadways in flood prone areas are elevated above flood levels of Hurricanes Matthew and Florence. Continue to upgrade Eastern North Carolina highways like US Highway 264/ Future Interstate 587, US Highway 17, US Highway 70/ Future Interstate 42 and US 301.

Prevent ENC Flooding: NCEAC urges our legislators to use the knowledge gained in the aftermath of Hurricanes Floyd, Matthew, and Florence to prevent flooding in future storms. We ask that State of North Carolina take the initiative and launch an effort to implement physical changes in the form of flood prevention measures to save lives and property along the various waterways in Eastern North Carolina. We encourage the state to consider the upstream management of water flow and its impact on the East.

Continue Health Care Reform: Continue efforts to reform Medicaid that include a provider led model of care phased in over 5 years and preservation of supplemental payments. Increase the number of North Carolinians with health insurance by closing the coverage gap. Preserve Certificate of Need. Support legislation which would allow for the creation of Association Health Plans, as well as statutory updates to small employer plan allowances.

Update Medical Education Infrastructure and Address Workforce Needs: The 40-year-old Brody medical education building has substantial deferred maintenance needs, is outdated and not configured for 21st century, state-of-the-art medical education and research. The outdated facility negatively impacts the ability to recruitment and retain physicians, faculty and researchers. Support ECU's request by fully funding for the planning and design of a new state-of-the-art medical education and research facility. To address the critical need for primary care physicians in NC, particularly rural areas, support ECU's request for recurring funds to incrementally increase Brody class size to 120 students per class.

Additionally, our Chambers consider the following items the priorities for 2019:

Support Models for Regional Health Care Delivery: Support Project Unify, which integrates Vidant Medical Group and ECU Physicians into a more cohesive and efficient system.

Economic Development: Predominately rural Eastern North Carolina is not seeing the economic growth being enjoyed by more urban areas of the state. NCEAC encourages our delegation to make it a priority of the Department of Commerce or the Economic Development Partnership of NC to create and implement a true rural development strategy.

Address Needs of Veterans: Eastern NC is home to a larger percentage of active duty military and Veterans than any other region of the state. We encourage the General Assembly to explore state options that would expand medical care for veterans.

Preserve Hospital Sales Tax Exemption: Hospitals do more than their fair share for communities every day. A change to the tax code may cost hospitals about 30 percent of their annual revenue stream. This would cripple their ability to deliver on their mission to provide patient care.

Reciprocity of Licensure: Transferability of licensures is a priority for the State of NC to ensure we are recruiting and retaining skilled workforce.

Early Education: NCEAC request that the General Assembly expand quality pre-k slots and increase teacher and early educator pay.

Public Education: NCEAC requests the General Assembly show a commitment to compensation for educators and school administrators that gives North Carolina a competitive advantage to recruit talent to the profession. Without professional pay, rural Eastern North Carolina counties are at a greater disadvantage in teacher recruitment and retention. Allow capital projects for public education to be funded through bond initiatives. Counties throughout North Carolina are unable to provide the needed resources for building maintenance and capital improvements without additional sources of revenue.

Community Colleges: Increasing student completion of degrees and certificates requires additional funding for student support services. Fund short-term continuing education programs at the same rate as curriculum programs. Allow colleges to earn FTE for Instruction in local jails. Allow community colleges to use performance-based funds for performance-based bonuses for faculty and staff. As with public education, professional salaries for faculty and staff are vital for the economic development of eastern North Carolina.

Address Transportation Needs: Invest in better rail access in Eastern NC to support economic development in the east. Provide for long term planning and funding to maintain our inland waterways for our ports and fishing fleets.

Invest in Broadband: Broadband availability improves quality of life by raising property values and attracting a dynamic workforce. It is important for agriculture and advanced manufacturing. Require more accurate reporting of broadband capability so more counties in Eastern NC can be eligible for broadband expansion funds. NCEAC requests that the General

Assembly explore all options to level the playing field so Eastern North Carolina can compete with other areas of the state that have greater broadband coverage.

Protect Water Quality: With recent regulatory reform efforts, special care should be taken to preserve the water quality in our region, particularly in terms of upstream management.

Affordable Housing: Expand and Protect Affordable Housing: Prioritize safe and affordable housing by advancing repair and replacement efforts from recent natural disasters; support robust funding of North Carolina's Housing Trust Fund at \$20 million, increase the Workforce Housing Loan Program to \$50 million, and designate a significant portion of the state's Small Cities' Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation for rural housing repair and rehabilitation needs.

Sustain a Military Friendly Climate: Provide necessary resources & support for local communities to protect the current strategic mission of military bases in the East. Reintroduce and support the Military Operations Protection Act to protect the training and low-level flight routes around our military installations. Continue initiative to recognize military training towards state requirements and to expand access to institutions of higher education. Support for the Preservation Trust Fund's request of \$12,820,865 in matching funds for the protection of 25,000 acres of farmland and forestland within NC in order to fund conservation easements and to preserve training capabilities around military bases in NC.

Agriculture: As the number one economic engine in the State of NC, we advocate for increased support of the Agriculture community who, in recent years, has been devastated by natural disasters.