



## INTRODUCTION

It seems that our state's anticipated surplus might not be as substantial as initially projected. With recent revenue collection data from April rolling in, it appears the expected surplus of \$400 million this year and \$1 billion next year might be significantly lower than anticipated, possibly even less than half of the initial projection. While the Consensus Forecasting Group has not announced a revised figure, they are currently meeting to reassess the situation. "The Consensus Forecasting Group (CFG), which includes the Office of State Budget and Management and the Legislature's Fiscal Research Division economists, is indeed meeting to re-evaluate the Consensus Revenue Forecast released in April. As was noted in that forecast, 'Late April, just after income tax payments are due, is traditionally marked by the highest uncertainty in revenue collections. If actual collections differ significantly from this revised consensus forecast, the CFG may issue another revised consensus in mid-to-late May.' The forecast released in April was developed prior to the availability of revenue collection data for April. The Forecasting Group is reviewing the April's data and the impact it will have on their forecast. We expect the Group will complete their evaluation and release a revised estimate very soon," the Office of State Budget and Management told a reporter.

If the forecast does indeed change significantly, it could greatly influence the ongoing short session. Priorities such as the expansion of Opportunity Scholarships, which carries a price tag of nearly \$500 million, and potential raises for teachers and state employees could exhaust the surplus entirely. This would not only affect numerous budget proposals but could also accelerate the session's timeline. Without additional funds to allocate, the budget process may become more streamlined and easier to conclude.

## POTENTIAL TAX REBATE

While the surplus figure may be in limbo, legislative leaders are still at work considering what they might do with potential funds. One option that has circulated this week is a tax rebate for North Carolinians. According to Senate leader Berger, this is on the table but only if it's enough to make a dent. "I don't think there'd be an interest in doing it unless the amount we could send out would be an amount that would make a difference — more than a half a tank of gas and stuff like that,"



## NORTH CAROLINA COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS



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## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Colleen Kochanek  
Ashley Matlock Perkinson  
Rachel E. Beaulieu  
P.O. Box 1038  
Wake Forest, NC 27588  
919.809.5600

[colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com](mailto:colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com)  
[ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com](mailto:ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com)  
[rachel@beaulieuedlaw.com](mailto:rachel@beaulieuedlaw.com)  
[www.kochaneklawgroup.com](http://www.kochaneklawgroup.com)

Senate leader Berger said. Legislative leaders attempted to provide tax rebates in 2019, but the effort ultimately stalled out and the funds went towards our state's savings instead. Senate leader Berger has suggested that the budget process, while often lengthy, is on track currently for a June budget vote. However, he has underscored that the next two weeks will be pivotal in determining whether the July 1 deadline can be met.

#### VOTER ID CASE

This Voter ID court case began at a federal courthouse in Winston-Salem. This long-awaited bench trial began on Monday and is expected to span 10 days. The results could potentially influence the necessity for voters to present their photo IDs this November. However, it is more likely that the trial's outcome will face appeals. Advocates for voting rights and the NAACP contend that the Voter ID requirement was established with discriminatory motives, consequently impeding minority voter access to the polls. "This case is about impermissible and intentional racial discrimination," NAACP attorney Kathleen Roblez told U.S. District Judge Loretta Biggs, adding the requirement "has already produced a discriminatory result for Black and brown voters," who she says are less likely to possess a qualifying ID. Republican legislative leaders, acting as defendants, argue that the statute includes numerous exceptions for individuals lacking an ID, along with a wide array of accepted forms of identification and ample resources to facilitate obtaining an eligible ID. They deny any discriminatory intent, asserting that the legislation was crafted to combat fraud. "A legislature bent on discriminating would not have created all of these exceptions," David Thompson, one of the GOP leaders' lawyers, said in the courtroom. "The General Assembly was compelled by the people of North Carolina to enact a voter ID law."

#### HOUSE BILL 10, REQUIRE SHERIFFS TO COOPERATE WITH ICE

As forecasted to over the interim by legislative leaders, a bill to require sheriffs to cooperate with ICE has proven to be a priority of the Republican-led legislature and has already passed the Senate. The controversial bill would require sheriffs to collaborate with federal immigration authorities if a suspected illegal immigrant is detained for committing a violent offense. The legislation permits any individual, including a federal agency, to lodge a complaint with the North Carolina Attorney General if they believe a sheriff has not adhered to the requirements outlined in the bill. Subsequently, the Attorney General is empowered to pursue a court order to ensure compliance with the law by sheriffs who are deemed sanctuary sheriffs.

#### 13<sup>th</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT REPUBLICAN RUNOFF

While ballots have been printed and votes have already been cast, Kelly Daughtry has announced that she is suspending her campaign for Congress. "Brad Knott will be the Republican nominee on May 14th," Daughtry said, in a written statement. "I extend my congratulations to him and wish him well. Brad has my full endorsement, and I want him to know that I am here to support him, not to oppose him. It is time we bring the Republican Party together." The statement goes on to explain that Daughtry wanted to be honest with her supporters and staff, and there was simply no way to win with her opponent's endorsement from former President Trump. This would seemingly hand the primary victory over to Brad Knott. However, it's not that simple. Since votes have already been cast and ballots have been printed, Daughtry could hypothetically still win despite her campaign being suspended. While it's possible, it is unlikely especially since Daughtry has been pretty clear and public about her announcement to end her campaign. The runoff is on May 14th.

## BILLS OF INTEREST

HOUSE BILL 823, Eliminate School Choice Program Waitlists. The provisions of this bill were replaced in the Senate Appropriations Committee with provisions to provide: (1) \$248 million in nonrecurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year for the Opportunity Scholarship Program; and (2) \$24.7 million in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year for the North Carolina Personal Education Student Accounts for Children with Disabilities Program. The bill would also increase annual appropriations for the Opportunity Scholarship Program for fiscal years 2025-2026 through 2031-2032 so that appropriations gradually increase from \$625 million in FY 2025-2026 to \$800 million in FY 2031-2032, and to \$825 million in FY 2032-2033. The bill as amended was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee and the full Senate. **The bill has been sent back to the House Rules Committee to consider the changes made to the bill in the Senate.**

HOUSE BILL 952, Supporting Law Enforcement, would provide \$300,000 to award grants to law enforcement agencies for initiatives supporting community policing, including funding for mental health officers. The bill also provides \$1 million to the Department of Justice to provide grants to law enforcement agencies to pay for the mental health screenings as required in the bill and for mental health officers. The bill would direct the Commission to establish:

- minimum mental health screening protocols that must be met in order to qualify for entry level employment and retention as an officer in temporary or probationary status or in a permanent position. The standards for entry level employment would include a psychological screening within one-year prior to certification performed by a physician, psychologist, or other mental health professional; and
- minimum annual mental health screening protocols for officers, including additional mental health screening protocols for officers following a traumatic event, including a psychological screening performed by a physician, psychologist, or other mental health professional.

**Introduced by Representatives Prather, Alston, Everitt, and Staton-Williams and referred to the House Rules Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 958, Workers Rights Act, would seek to protect workers' rights in North Carolina and appropriate funds for that purpose, including provisions that would abolish at-will employment; provide for mandatory paid work breaks and paid meal periods; eliminate the subminimum wage for tipped employees; prohibit discrimination or retaliation for disclosing wage information; repeal the ban on public employee collective bargaining; prohibit mistreatment of contract employees; allow a city or county by ordinance to set a local minimum wage; and authorize worker safety programs by local governments. **Introduced by Representatives Logan, Autry, Harrison, and Roberson and referred to the House Rules Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 973, Ban PFAS in Food Packaging, would prohibit a person from knowingly manufacturing, selling, or offering for sale any covered product (a package, compostable container, or packaging component that is intended for direct food content) that contains intentionally added PFAS in this State. **Introduced by Representatives Autry, Harrison, Butler, and Cervania and referred to the House Appropriations Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 977, Crisis Pregnancy Center Accountability Study, directs the Department of Health and Human Services to study the unmet health and resource needs facing pregnant women in the state and the impact of crisis pregnancy centers on the ability of clients to obtain accurate, non-coercive health care information and timely access to services. The bill defines "crisis pregnancy centers" as nonprofit organizations other than hospitals, ambulatory surgical facilities

or clinics that perform abortions. DHHS shall report the results of the study to the legislature by May 1, 2025. The bill appropriates \$250,000 for the study and report. **Introduced by Representatives von Haefen, Butler, Crawford and Staton-Williams and referred to the House Rules Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 980, Medical Information/Foster Care/Minors, authorizes parental access to medical records of a minor for certain medical services for which the minor may grant consent without parental involvement. These services include the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of venereal disease, pregnancy, abuse of controlled substances or alcohol, and emotional disturbance. They do not include abortion. **Introduced by Representative Loftis and referred to the House Health Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 982, Faith in Mental Health Pilot Program, directs the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a pilot program to allow religious institutions to better respond to individuals in the community with mental health or substance abuse needs, initially only in Vance and Granville counties. DHHS shall collaborate with the local health department and LME/MCO in these counties to develop the program. Religious institutions include any church, mosque, synagogue or temple with a physical place for worship where nonprofit religious services are conducted. The program shall provide three designations under the Faith in Mental Health Pilot Program, each with increasing levels of requirements including training, education materials and events, support groups, and a resource library. The bill appropriates \$10,000 to DHHS to develop and implement the program. **Introduced by Representatives Sossamon, Winslow, Ross and Fontenot and referred to the House Health Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 990, Mental Health Triage Unit Pilot for LSAUs, would direct the State Board of Education to establish a Mental Health Triage Unit Pilot Program to provide funds to establish at least one mental health triage unit in each participating local school administrative unit. The Program would be administered for a period of three fiscal years and expire on June 30, 2027. The State Board would select up to eight local school administrative units to participate in the Program and consider at least the following factors when assessing applications: (1) the level of resources available to the local school administrative unit that would receive the funds; (2) the overall impact on student mental health in the local school administrative unit if that unit were selected to participate in the Program; and (3) the history in the local school administrative unit of sudden traumatic events. Each participating local school administrative unit would receive \$250,000 in each fiscal year in which funds are made available to establish and maintain at least one mental health triage unit. The mental health triage unit would provide mental health resources to students and staff and be on call during school operating hours to respond to mental health emergencies that may arise. Participating local school administrative units would inform students and staff about any available mental health triage unit and provide opportunities to learn about the purposes and function of a mental health triage unit.

The Department of Public Instruction and the Center for Safer Schools, in consultation with the Department of Public Safety, would establish standards and guidelines for the development, operation, and staffing of mental health triage units, including a requirement that each mental health triage unit be composed of at least one of each of the following personnel: (1) school nurse; (2) school social worker; or (3) school counselor who is a licensed clinical mental health counselor. No later than March 15 of each year, the State Board of Education would report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the identity of each local school administrative unit that received funds and an assessment of the impact of the Program on the mental health and well-being of students in the participating local school administrative units. The bill would provide

\$2 million to the Department of Public Instruction to implement the Mental Health Triage Unit Pilot Program. **Introduced by Representatives T. Brown, Prather, Ball, and Alston and referred to the House Appropriations Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 999, Healthy and Safe Students in Every School, would:

- require the governing body of a public school unit to ensure that each school within the unit has a school nurse available to students at all times during the instructional day, and allow the governing bodies to hire full-time or part-time nurses directly or contract with a third party to provide nursing services;
- provide \$89 million to the Department of Public Instruction to increase the School Health Personnel Allotment in order to provide at least one full-time, permanent school nurse in every school;
- require the governing body of a public school unit to provide for a supply of emergency naloxone nasal spray on school property for use by trained school personnel to provide emergency medical aid to persons suffering from an opioid or fentanyl emergency during the school day and at school-sponsored events on school property;
- require each school to store in a secure, but unlocked and easily accessible location, a minimum of two boxes of 8 milligram naloxone containing a total of at least four nasal spray doses;
- require the principal of each school to designate one or more school personnel to receive initial and annual retraining from a school nurse or qualified representative of the local health department regarding the storage and emergency use of naloxone nasal spray, and require the school nurse or other designated school personnel who has received training to obtain a non-patient specific prescription for naloxone nasal spray from a physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner of the local health department serving the area in which the school is located;
- provide that a governing body of a public school unit; its members, employees, designees, agents, or volunteers; and a physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner of the local health department shall not be liable in civil damages to any party for any act authorized by this section or for any omission relating to that act unless that act or omission amounts to gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing; and
- provide \$350,000 from the Opioid Abatement Reserve to the Department of Public Instruction to be allocated to public school units for the purchase of an initial school supply of naloxone nasal spray and to facilitate the training required.

**Introduced by Representatives Ball, Lambeth, Staton-Williams, and White and referred to the House Education K-12 Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1000, Protect Access to In Vitro Fertilization, would prohibit the State or any of its political subdivisions from prohibiting, unreasonably limiting, or interfering with any of the following: (1) the right of a patient to access assisted reproductive technology; (2) the right of a health care provider to provide or assist with the provision of evidence-based information related to assisted reproductive technology; or (3) the right of a health care provider to perform or assist with the performance of assisted reproductive technology. The bill would provide \$500,000 to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Health Benefits, to increase funding for Medicaid maternal support services, also known as the Baby Love Program. **Introduced by Representatives Prather, Staton-Williams, Everitt, and Alston and referred to the House Appropriations Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1004, AI Study Committee/Funds, would establish the Artificial Intelligence Study Committee to study artificial intelligence (AI) and its various uses, including: (1) examination of

how AI impacts State government, local governments, business, citizens, operations, and elections; (2) review of ways that AI can be used positively and ways that AI can be used negatively; (3) consideration of the long-term and short-term impacts of AI, as well as legal issues associated with the use of AI; (4) development of legislative proposals and law changes necessitated by AI; and (5) recommendations to the executive branch regarding AI. The bill would provide \$100,000 to the Department of Information Technology for the Artificial Intelligence Study Committee and continued monitoring of artificial intelligence in State government. **Introduced by Representatives Rudow and Logan and referred to the House Appropriations Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1010, Modernize Certain Medicaid Provider Rates, directs the Department of Health and Human Services to increase Medicaid rates paid to physicians, physician assistants, certified nurse practitioners, specialty medical health providers and dental care providers to the same level as the 2023 Medicare rates, beginning as soon as practicable after July 1, 2024. The bill appropriates \$395 million to implement the rate increases. **Introduced by Representatives Reives, Lambeth, White and Cunningham and referred to the House Appropriations Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1011/SENATE BILL 814, Healthy Students – A Nurse in Every School, would require that a permanent school nurse is on the staff of every public school in the state. The bill appropriates \$89 million annually for this purpose. **Introduced by Representatives Everitt and Alston and referred to the House Appropriations Committee. Introduced by Senators Grafstein, Batch and Garrett and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1021/SENATE BILL 826, School Mental Health Support Act, creates two grant programs to address mental health needs. The bill directs the Department of Public Instruction to establish the School Mental Health Grant Program to increase student access to mental health support personnel in public schools. DPI shall award funds based on need, prioritizing public school units with a greater proportion of students with limited access to mental health services, including students with no health insurance and with disabilities. The State Education Assistance Authority shall administer the Mental Health Worker Loan Repayment Program to provide loan repayment grants to eligible mental health workers to repay student debt. The bill appropriates \$50 million annually for each of the two programs. **Introduced by Representatives Everitt and Prather and referred to the House Appropriations Committee. Introduced by Senators Smith, Batch and Grafstein and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1029/SENATE BILL 871, Right to Try Individualized Treatments, authorizes a patient to request and a manufacturer to provide the patient with an individualized investigational drug, biological product or device that is unique and produced exclusively for use by the specific patient. Eligible patients include those who have:

- a life threatening or severely debilitating illness;
- considered all other treatment options approved by the US Food and Drug Administration;
- received a recommendation from the treating physician for use of an individualized product;
- given informed consent in writing;
- documentation from the treating physician that the patient meets all the above criteria.

A manufacturer may provide an individualized product to a patient at no cost or for a charge but is not required to provide an individualized product to a patient. No licensing board or entity responsible for Medicare certification shall take action against a health care provider based solely on the provider's recommendation to a patient regarding an individualized treatment.

The bill appropriates \$50,000 to DHHS to implement the act. **Introduced by Representatives Chesser, Blackwell, Potts and Reeder and referred to the House Health Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1030, Quality Care for Mothers, requires that advertising by pregnancy centers convey accurate and complete information about services offered by the centers, and makes it unlawful for a pregnancy center to knowingly make false or misleading statements or provide false or misleading information about the nature or location of the center, the medical risks of pregnancy and abortion, the qualifications and experience of persons providing treatment at the center, or the types and methods of services provided by the center. The bill defines “pregnancy center” as a nonprofit organization other than a hospital, surgical center or clinic that performs abortions, and that holds itself out as a provider of care and support for pregnant women. The bill appropriates \$25,000 to the Department of Justice to enforce violations of the act. **Introduced by Representatives Cervania, Budd and Crawford and referred to the House Rules Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 1056, PA Licensure Interstate Compact, authorizes North Carolina to join a multistate PA Licensure Compact to strengthen access to medical services by enhancing the portability of a license to practice as a physician assistant. The compact shall come into effect on the date the compact statute is enacted into law in the seventh participating state. The PA Licensure Compact Commission established by participating states shall govern the compact and shall meet once a year. Each state shall have one delegate who is a current member or administrator of that state’s licensing board.

A licensee wishing to practice in a state participating in the compact other than the state of original licensure must have graduated from an accredited PA program and hold a current PA certification, have no felony or misdemeanor conviction, hold a PA license from a participating state, have had no revocation of a license or limitation on a license currently held, and meet other requirements. The bill spells out authorities of the commission and the disciplinary procedures and authority regarding licensees. **Introduced by Representatives Pare, Sasser and White and referred to the House Health Committee.**

SENATE BILL 785, Zero-Based Budgeting, would require the use of zero-based budgeting for state agencies on a rotating basis. A *zero-based budget* would be a budget that reflects the amount of funding deemed necessary to achieve the most cost-effective performance of a State agency along with an explanation of the tasks to be performed by the State agency together with the goals and objectives for the State agency for a period not to exceed two years. The budget would have zero as its basis and would not reflect any prior appropriation amount, adjusted or otherwise. **Introduced by Senator Burgin and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 792, Create Public App. for Reporting Threats, would direct the Department of Public Safety, in consultation with the Department of Information Technology and the State Bureau of Investigation, to develop an operational plan for the creation of a digital public safety application that does, at a minimum, each of the following: (1) allows any member of the public to quickly and anonymously report information regarding threats to public safety; (2) communicates with existing applications and initiatives designed to protect public safety; and (3) communicates with State and local law enforcement agencies regarding reported threats deemed to be credible. **Introduced by Senator Marcus and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 797, Modify the Rate Reduction Triggers, would amend the statute regarding individual income taxes to increase the individual income tax rate imposed after 2025 from 3.99% to 4% of the taxpayer’s NC income. The bill would also change the rate reduction trigger. The bill

also would require the Office of State Budget and Management and the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly to annually jointly calculate the conditions necessary to trigger a rate reduction and to report the results of the calculations to the Department of Revenue and the specified NCGA committees by no later than October 1 of each year. **Introduced by Senator Chaudhuri and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 800, Comm. Colleges/Mental Health/Tuition Waiver, includes mental health clinicians that work in 911 call centers and respond with first responders to calls for service in the category of students receiving tuition and registration fee waivers at community colleges. **Introduced by Senator Woodard and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 801, Healthy and Safe Students in Every School, is identical to House Bill 999, summarized above in this Legislative Report. **Introduced by Senator Adcock and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 806, Community Emergency Response Training, appropriated \$3 million annually to expand and promote the Community Emergency Response Team program and training, including expansion of work with local community organizations to conduct training sessions. **Introduced by Senator Smith and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 808/HOUSE BILL 1001, Right to Use Contraception Act, states that a person has the right to obtain contraceptives and engage in contraception, and a health care provider has the right to provide contraceptives and contraception-related information. No state or local government law, regulation or policy may limit, delay or impede access to contraceptives or information related to contraception. To defend against a claim of such infringement, a party must establish that the law, regulation or policy significantly advances the safety of contraception and the safety of contraception cannot be advanced by a less restrictive alternative means, or the law, regulation or policy is also being applied to other medically similar drugs or devices. The bill appropriates \$3 million to expand education programs related to the NC Medicaid Family Planning Program (the “Be Smart” program). **Introduced by Senators Smith, Grafstein and Garrett and referred to the Senate Rules Committee. Introduced by Representatives Prather, Staton-Williams, Von Haefen and Everitt and referred to the House Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 832, 2024 Safe Drinking Water Act, would protect North Carolina citizens from harmful toxins in drinking water by requiring the Commission for Public Health to establish maximum contaminant levels for chemicals that are probable or known carcinogens or are otherwise toxic and provide funding for those activities. **Introduced by Senators Smith, Batch, and Garrett and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 838, MOMnibus 2.5, requires the Department of Health and Human Services to develop, in conjunction with community-based organizations led by black women that serve primarily black birthing people, an evidence-based implicit bias training program for maternal care providers. All maternal care providers would be required to complete the training. DHHS would establish a Perinatal Education Grant Program to establish or expand perinatal education programs in rural, underserved or low-wealth areas. DHHS would also develop a training program for community health workers in rural, underserved or low-wealth areas to provide comprehensive education on the warning signs of complications after birth. The bill appropriates a total of \$3.5 million annually and \$1.5 million in one-time funds to carry out the requirements of the act. **Introduced by Senators Murdock, Batch and Robinson and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**



SENATE BILL 843, The Freedom from Fentanyl Act, would: (1) enact the Freedom From Fentanyl Act to restrict the sale of vapor products near child care facilities, schools, certain institutions of higher education, and religious places of worship; (2) create a Fentanyl Misuse Task Force; and (3) provide \$15 million to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, to purchase opioid antagonists for local health departments to address opioid-related drug overdoses and reduce the number of opioid-related deaths and distribute free of charge to North Carolina residents. **Introduced by Senators Batch, Smith, and Grafstein and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 844, Middle Class Momentum Act, would increase the amount of the income tax standard deduction to the following: (1) married, filing jointly/surviving spouse, \$26,000 (was, \$25,500); (2) head of household, \$19,500 (was, \$19,125); (3) single, \$13,000 (was, \$12,750); and (4) married, filing separately, \$13,000 (was, \$12,750). The increase would be effective for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2025. **Introduced by Senators Batch, Grafstein, and Garrett and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 848, Protect Reproductive Health, would:

- codify Roe and Casey protections; to preserve women's access to out-of-state abortions;
- criminalize the interference with a woman seeking an abortion;
- create a private right of action against an individual who interferes with a woman seeking an abortion;
- declare that the right to use contraception to prevent pregnancy shall not be limited;
- prohibit the tracking of individuals who purchase emergency contraception;
- clarify that individuals who provide transportation to abortions are not criminally liable; and
- prohibit geofencing within a one-mile radius of a healthcare facility that provides abortions.

**Introduced by Senators Batch, Smith, and Grafstein and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 849, Increase Safe Use of Firearms, would: (1) authorize the issuance of an extreme risk protection order to restrict temporarily a person's access to firearms if there is evidence that the person poses a danger of physical harm to self or others; (2) promote gun safety by strengthening the law governing the safe storage of firearms; (3) require universal background checks; (4) make The State Bureau of Investigation responsible for pistol purchase permits; (5) reinstate the permit requirement to purchase a pistol for private sales; and (6) exempt firearm safety and storage items from the sales tax. **Introduced by Senators Batch, Garrett, and Grafstein and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 854, Protect Access to In Vitro Fertilization, is identical to House Bill 1000, summarized above in this Legislative Report. **Introduced by Senators Marcus, Grafstein, and Murdock and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 865, Study Cell Phone Use in Schools, would direct the Department of Public Instruction, in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services, the North Carolina School Boards Association, the North Carolina Association of School Administrators, the University of North Carolina School of Public Health, the University of North Carolina School of Education, and the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University, to study cell phone policies in public school units. The Department would contact the governing bodies of public school units to collect, and with the above named organizations analyze, the following information:

- whether the policy is implemented by the governing board of the public school unit or at the individual school level;
- what the cell phone policy is, and specifically if the school uses any of the following policies:
  - complete ban on cell phone use or possession at school;
  - storage of cell phones in a secure location during the instructional day;
  - no cell phone restrictions;
- the impact of the policy on learning;
- the impact of the policy on cyberbullying;
- the impact of the policy on school safety;
- any other information the Department or consultant agencies deem relevant to the study.

No later than June 30, 2025, the Friday Institute would report the findings of the study to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. **Introduced by Senators Chaudhuri and Burgin and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 867, Superintendent of Public Instruction Min Reqs, would provide that, in order to be eligible to hold office as the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the individual must have at least one year of experience as (i) a teacher or school administrator in this State or (ii) a member of a local board of education or the State Board of Education. The bill would provide \$10,000 to the State Board of Elections to ensure qualification of candidates as required. **Introduced by Senator Chaudhuri and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 869, Baby Bond Trust Fund, would establish the Baby Bond Program Trust Fund to (i) establish and fund individual accounts in the amount of \$2,000 for the financial benefit of eligible individuals and (ii) enable contributors to save funds and increase the likelihood of the account holder's future financial success. The bill would provide \$10 million to the Department of State Treasurer for these purposes. **Introduced by Senators Meyer, Salvador, and Murdock and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 870, Flags at Every School, would require and fund the display of the United States and North Carolina flags on school grounds near the main entrance to the school and in every public school classroom. The bill would provide to the Department of Public Instruction \$1 million in nonrecurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year and \$100,000 in recurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year for the purchase of the flags to be displayed as required. The bill also would require regional schools and laboratory schools to display the US and NC flags on school grounds near the main entrance to the school and in each classroom; recite the Pledge of Allegiance daily; and provide age-appropriate instruction on the meaning and origins of the flag and pledge. The bill would prohibit compelling a person to stand, salute the flag, or recite the pledge. **Introduced by Senator Settle and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 875, Total Maternal Care, creates several programs administered by the Department of Health and Human Services to support maternal health. The Maternal Mortality Prevention Grant Program would award grants to establish or expand programs for the prevention of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among black women. DHHS shall develop, in collaboration with community-based organizations led by black women that serve primarily black birthing people, an evidence-based implicit bias training program for health care professionals involved in perinatal care. All health care professionals would be required to complete the training. The bill also establishes rights for perinatal care patients. An appropriation to the UNC Board of Governors would support lactation consultant training programs at NC Agricultural & Technical State University and Johnson C. Smith University, and DHHS shall

provide technical assistance to these two universities regarding curriculum, recruitment, and placement of graduates in underserved areas. DHHS shall establish a stillbirth prevention program called Count the Kicks to provide educational resources on tracking fetal movement. **Introduced by Senators Smith and Batch and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 878, Working Families Act, would: (1) reduce parent copayments for subsidized child care; (2) reenact the child tax credit; (3) increase the state minimum wage to fifteen dollars per hour on Labor Day 2024 and grant local governments flexibility to set a higher local minimum wage; (4) increase the income eligibility limit for the property tax homestead circuit breaker; (5) create a homebuyers' assistance program with the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency for first-time homebuyers who work as public servants; and (6) enact the North Carolina Paid Family Leave Insurance Act to help working families and create the employer grant fund to offset costs incurred by employers and appropriate funds for that purpose. **Introduced by Senators Grafstein, Batch, and Garrett and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 880, No Deepfakes in Election Communication, would prohibit a person, corporation, committee, or other entity from, within 90 days of an election at which a candidate for elective office will appear on the ballot, distributing a synthetic media message that the person, corporation, committee, or other entity knows or should have known is a deceptive and fraudulent deepfake of a candidate or political party on the State or local ballot. The prohibition would not apply if the audio or visual media complies with all of requirements and includes a disclosure stating: "This \_\_\_\_\_ has been manipulated or generated by artificial intelligence." A candidate whose appearance, action, or speech is depicted using a deceptive and fraudulent deepfake could seek injunctive or other equitable relief prohibiting the publication of the deceptive and fraudulent deepfake. The bill would provide \$100,000 to the State Board of Elections to enforce these provisions. **Introduced by Senators Salvador, Robinson, and Meyer and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 883, Increased Security - Nonpublics & Day Cares, would:

- require each licensed child care facility to develop an Emergency Preparedness Plan in accordance with rules adopted by the Department for those plans, and as part of the Emergency Preparedness Plan, to hold a full facility-wide lockdown exercise with local law enforcement at least once a year;
- require each certified adult day care and adult day health program to develop and implement a lockdown protocol to ensure preparedness to protect the safety of program participants, their families, and program staff;
- require the Social Services Commission to adopt rules to for the adult day care and adult day health programs to implement this requirement, which would contain at least all of the following: (1) a description of the situations and notifications that require lockdown and when a required lockdown may be terminated; (2) a requirement to conduct periodic lockdown drills at least once annually; and (3) a requirement to submit, in the format prescribed by the Department, a report of all lockdown activities conducted during the preceding calendar year;
- allow the Department of Health and Human Services, in its discretion, impose a civil penalty not to exceed \$1,000 against an adult day care or adult day health program that violates these requirements; and
- appropriate funds to support implementation and enforcement of these requirements.

**Introduced by Senators Batch, Grafstein, and Chaudhuri and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 889, Protecting First Responders Act, increases the penalty for persons assaulting emergency responders from a Class I to a Class H felony. It establishes new criminal penalties for exposure of emergency responders to fentanyl and failure to notify emergency responders of the presence of fentanyl at a location where the responder is responding. The bill appropriates \$10.35 million for grants to state and local government agencies employing paramedics and emergency medical technicians to purchase bulletproof vests and backpack plates for these employees. It sets minimum wages of \$30 per hour for paramedics and \$26 per hour for emergency medical technicians and requires employers to provide mental health counseling services to these employees. **Introduced by Senators Alexander, Britt and Burgin and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 895, Parents' and Students' Bill of Rights, would enumerate the rights held by parents related to the upbringing, education, healthcare, and mental health of their minor child, enumerate the rights held by students related to their own education, and provide \$50,000 to the Department of Public Instruction to conduct a public awareness campaign of these rights. **Introduced by Senators Grafstein, Batch, and Garrett and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

SENATE BILL 899, Diagnostic Imaging Parity, requires that the laboratory fee and interpretation of laboratory results be included in the insurance coverage for the screening and early detection of cervical cancer and low-dose screening mammography. Cost-sharing requirements for a diagnostic or supplemental examination for breast cancer may be no less favorable than the cost-sharing requirements applicable to low-dose screening mammography for breast cancer. The bill also strengthens the requirements to notify patients whether they have dense breast tissue or not and to inform those with dense breast tissue of the increased risk of breast cancer and the benefits of supplemental screening. **Introduced by Senators Batch, Mayfield and Chaudhuri and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

## BILL UPDATES

SENATE BILL 508, 2023 Budget Tech/Other Corrections, makes several modifications to various laws, including requiring Union County to extend the services of its regional autopsy center to designated counties on a set schedule. Included counties are Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond, Rowan and Stanly. **The conference report passed the House on May 1 and the Senate on May 2 and is awaiting Governor Cooper's signature.**

- Colleen Kochanek  
NCCEP Legislative Counsel  
Kochanek Law Group  
919.809.5601  
[colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com](mailto:colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com)  
[www.kochaneklawgroup.com](http://www.kochaneklawgroup.com)<sup>i</sup>

Ashley Matlock Perkinson  
Perkinson Law Firm  
919.210.8209  
[ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com](mailto:ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com)

Rachel E. Beaulieu  
Rachel E. Beaulieu Law Office, PLLC  
919.896.6296  
[Rachel@BeaulieuEdLaw.com](mailto:Rachel@BeaulieuEdLaw.com)

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