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LEGISLATIVE REPORT April 14, 2025

North Carolina Senate Republicans selected Sen. Michael Lee of New Hanover County as their new Majority Leader, succeeding Sen. Paul Newton. Lee, an attorney who has served in the Senate since 2014, was chosen unanimously. As Majority Leader, Lee will work closely with Senate leader Phil Berger and lead caucus meetings on policy discussions. Lee, who previously chaired the budget committee, has been a strong advocate for expanding taxpayer-funded private school options and limiting diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in public schools. In other cases, he has also taken more moderate stances, such as opposing strict abortion bans early in the debate over new restrictions. "Michael works day in and day out to do the best for his constituents," said Senate leader Phil Berger, in a news release. "He is someone every senator — Republican or Democrat — can turn to for advice and mentorship. I am thankful for his willingness to step forward to help lead our caucus." Democrats also praised Sen. Lee for his willingness to listen to their concerns and discuss issues.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Uncertainty surrounding federal funding is complicating budget negotiations in North Carolina, as state lawmakers grapple with potential reductions in federal support, particularly in response to President Trump's proposed spending cuts. If these cuts occur, North Carolina could lose billions of dollars, putting pressure on the state to replace funding for key programs and jobs. This uncertainty comes as Republican lawmakers push for new tax cuts. "You'll have members taking a look to see if we want to turn the dial, the knobs, a little bit on tax cuts," Hall said earlier this month. "I think we want to continue to go down. We're definitely not going up."

Senate leader Berger commented Thursday that he and other leaders are monitoring reports about President Trump's proposed \$100 million budget cut to North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services. While they haven't decided on actions yet, Berger stated they are exploring solutions. He emphasized that they would take necessary steps if required. "The folks in Washington have a long history of talking about a lot of things, and a very short list of things they actually do," Berger said.



NORTH CAROLINA COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS



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The Senate is scheduled to unveil their budget proposal on Monday night, April 14th and quickly move the bill through the necessary committees and onto the Senate floor for votes on Wednesday and Thursday.

HOUSE BILL FILING DEADLINE EXTENDED

The House bill filing deadline was extended an extra week to April 10th as the legislative staff could not complete all the bills in time for the previous deadline. Hundreds of bills were filed over the last two weeks after the Senate did the same for their deadline. We continue to review bills and are always relieved when the deadline passes as we know what we are dealing with for the session.

GENERAL INTEREST BILLS

House Bill 554, Rev Laws Tech Changes/BBA Changes/P2P Tax Parity, would make various technical, clarifying, and administrative changes to the revenue laws; conform to the federal system for auditing partnerships by imposing tax at the partnership level for federal changes and by authorizing refunds for federal changes.

House Bill 565, Check Yes, Save Lives, would allow taxpayers to enroll in the organ donation program via their income tax return.

House Bill 574, Workforce Development Pilot Project, would provide funds to the North Carolina Workforce Development Coalition to provide grants to employers to encourage employer-sponsored training with a focus on increasing job creation, reducing employee turnover, improving employee wages, and upgrading the skills of workers in their occupation.

House Bill 579, NC House Public Access Act of 2025, would facilitate civic engagement with and transparency of legislative proceedings by equipping additional areas of the General Assembly complex with equipment to allow for real-time and time-shifted remote viewing and appropriate funds for the same.

House Bill 580, SBOE Legislative Changes, would make various elections law changes, as recommended by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, including: (1) making confidential any information the State Board of Elections or county board possesses that would disclose that an identifiable voter has requested an absentee ballot, to become a public record upon the opening of the voting place, unless otherwise protected from disclosure by law; (2) requiring the county board of elections to also create a list of applications made for absentee ballots received and approved by the county board (the list would be a public record); (3) amending the process for counting ballots cast on election day to require that counting of ballots cast during early voting begin at 5:00 pm on election day: however, counting could begin between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm on election day if a resolution has been adopted at least two days before the election stating the hour and place of counting the ballots; (4) amending the acceptable forms of photo identification when voting to require various forms of identification, no longer requiring them to be identification cards; and (5) allowing a person who will become qualified by age to register and vote in the general election for which the primary is held, even though not so qualified by the date of the primary to register and vote in the primary and general election on the day.

House Bill 583, Law Enforcement/Destroy Certain Firearms, would authorize law enforcement agencies to destroy unclaimed firearms, firearms confiscated after conviction of certain offenses, and firearms purchased by or voluntarily surrendered to the law enforcement agency

House Bill 596, Standards Advisory Commission, would establish the Standard Course of Study Advisory Commission to involve stakeholders in establishing the standard course of study and to make recommendations regarding all aspects of the standards and competencies of the standard course of study.

House Bill 598, Live Event Ticketing Protections & Reforms, would create consumer protections for secondary ticket purchasers and prohibit secondary ticket sellers from using the name of a venue or event in their website address.

House Bill 607, Regulate Hemp Consumable Products, would regulate the sale and distribution of hemp-derived consumable products.

House bill 608, Protect Health and Gov't Personnel Info., would amend the definition of "without authority" as it pertains to computer trespass to include, in the case of computer data that is in a personnel file of a local, State, or federal government employee, the person has no authority under local, State, or federal law to view or otherwise access that information or has willfully failed to follow the requirements of the local, State, or federal law granting such authority. The bill would provide that, if the injury arises from a violation involving trespass to computer data that is (1) protected health information or (2) in the personnel file of a local, State, or federal employee, the injured person may sue and recover for each violation the greater of the damages sustained or \$5,000 and the costs of the suit.

House Bill 610, Study on Year-Round School, would direct the Department of Public Instruction to study the feasibility of requiring each local school administrative unit to maintain at least one school that operates on a year-round school calendar for each grade level, kindergarten through grade 12, and report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than January 15, 2027. All grade levels would not need to be offered year-round at the same school.

House Bill 613, The Vehicle Registration Convenience Act, would allow a vehicle owner, when a vehicle registration is initially issued, to elect a month within 12 months of issuance upon which the vehicle's registration expires.

House Bill 622, Limit Excessive Mag Sizes, would limit the size of ammunition magazines.

House Bill 624, Prescription Drug Pricing, would promote prescription drug price transparency.

House Bill 628, Reenact Child Tax Credit, would reenact the child tax credit.

House Bill 630, Restore LEA Sales Tax Benefit, would restore the sales tax refund authorized for local school administrative units.

House Bill 643, Clarify Firearm Storage Law, would clarify that the law requiring the storage of firearms to protect minors applies to firearms that are loaded and unloaded.

House Bill 646, Const. Amend.: Remove Slavery as Punishment, would amend the State Constitution to provide that slavery and involuntary servitude are forever prohibited.

House Bill 674, The Firearms Liberty Act, would allow the issuance of lifetime concealed handgun permits, provide that a concealed carry permittee who allows the permit to lapse does not have to take another firearms safety and training course upon applying for renewal under certain

conditions, protect the property rights of persons subject to a domestic violence protective order by allowing them to store their firearms with or sell their firearms through a qualified licensed firearms dealer, and authorize the storage and use of defensive devices in biometric safes for schools.

House Bill 677, Open Movie Captioning in Movie Theaters, would require open movie captioning in movie theaters under certain circumstances.

House Bill 678, Ensure Constitutional Government, would amend the State constitution to provide that the Governor does not have statewide emergency powers which permit him to rule by decree for an indefinite period of time, protect the constitutional rights of the people during a state of emergency, trigger a special session of the North Carolina General Assembly upon the calling by the Governor of a statewide state of emergency, restore the actual intent of the Emergency Management Act, and require General Assembly approval of emergency measures lasting more than two weeks.

House Bill 689, Expanding Workforce and Education Act, would expand North Carolina's workforce by providing in-state tuition to North Carolina high school graduates who meet certain criteria

House Bill 700, The Patients' Restoration of Rights Act, would allow a patient or personal representative of a patient to bring an action for death or injuries alleged to have resulted from medical malpractice arising out of a health care provider's performance of or failure to perform professional services if (i) the alleged death or injury arose on or after March 1, 2020, and (ii) the alleged death or injury was not the direct result of the patient contracting COVID-19.

Senate Bill 413/House Bill 474, Right to Use Contraception, would provide that the right to use contraception implicates the fundamental liberty to prevent pregnancy, and that it is the policy of the State of North Carolina that this State has no legitimate governmental interest in limiting the freedom to use contraception to prevent pregnancy.

Senate Bill 535, Regulate Hemp-Derived Beverages, would regulate nonalcoholic hemp-derived beverages.

Senate Bil 538, Family Empowerment Act, would expand child care assistance, establish state-level family leave incentives, strengthen parental support services, promote work-family balance in North Carolina and appropriate funds for those purposes.

Senate Bill 542, Western NC Support; Expand Comm. Eco. Dev., would provide financial support for recovery efforts in Western North Carolina and expand community economic development services.

Senate Bill 550, Coaches Care Act, would require youth athletics coaches to receive training in youth mental health first aid.

Senate Bill 558, Eliminating "DEI" in Public Higher Ed., would demonstrate the General Assembly's intent that students, professors, administrators, and other employees of public institutions of higher education recognize the equality and rights of all persons and prohibit public institutions of higher education from promoting certain concepts that are contrary to that intent including promoting diversity, equity and Inclusion.

Senate 560, Taskforce on Missing BIPOC Women, would establish a task force on missing women and girls who are black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) to develop policy changes that will work to address the lack of care and concern for missing and murdered BIPOC women and girls with State governmental agencies.

Senate Bill 561, The Working Hearts, Empowered Homes Act, would integrate and expand healthcare, child care, nutritional assistance, and preventive care programs to strengthen support for working families in North Carolina; and appropriate funds for these purposes.

Senate Bill 562, Cybersecurity and Quantum Resilience Study, would establish the North Carolina Cybersecurity and Quantum Resilience Study Commission to investigate the potential impacts of emerging quantum computing technologies on the security of State systems, legacy encryption methods, and critical infrastructure—including the Internet of Things (IoT) and smart city initiatives.

Senate Bill 575, Improve Pedestrian Safety, would: (1) make failure to yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian while operating a motor vehicle a Class 2 misdemeanor if the pedestrian is seriously injured; (2) add a pedestrian safety module to the driver education curriculum; and (3) require the Division of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Public Instruction to study methods for improving the driver education curriculum with respect to its instruction on public safety.

Senate Bill 576, E-Bike Definition and Local Regulation, would clarify the definition of electric assisted bicycle and authorize local government regulation.

Senate Bill 578, North Carolina CARDINAL Corps Act, would establish the North Carolina Communities Advancing Real Development by Investing in Newly Accomplished Leaders, or CARDINAL, Corps Program to expand opportunities for selected individuals by providing fellowship funds to support entry into critical, high-need sectors facing shortages including disaster relief and recovery, education, public safety, public service, farming and food security, and services to military families and veterans.

Senate Bill 582, Wellness Break Act, would direct the State Human Resources Commission to adopt rules and policies for sabbatical leave for long-term employees.

Senate Bill 583, Lead. Invest. Families/Foster Teen Act (LIFT), would implement the Leading Investments in Families and Foster Teens Act and the Healthy Start NC program to reduce maternal mortality and childhood poverty and offset costs by modifying the corporate income tax rate to keep the effective tax rate for corporate taxpayers more closely aligned with that which is required of individual taxpayers of the state.

Senate Bill 588, Pregnant Workers Protection Act, would: expand the protected classes under the State's employment discrimination statute to include pregnancy; make it a discriminatory practice under the State's Disabilities Protection Act for an employer to fail to provide reasonable accommodations for any limitation of an employee related to pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition, unless the employer can demonstrate that providing such accommodations would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the business of the employer; define *pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions* to include pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, including lactation; provide that pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions are considered a physical impairment when they substantially limit one or more major life

activities; and include *pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions* in the definition of *handicapping condition* under the State's Fair Housing Act.

Senate Bill 611, *Allow Consecutive Remote License Renewal*, would allow consecutive remote license renewals for non-Real ID compliant drivers licenses.

Senate Bill 620, *The STRONG Act of 2025*, would: enact the Stopping Trafficking and Reinforcing Opioid and Narcotics Guardrails (S.T.R.O.N.G.) ACT to provide for a comprehensive statewide response to the fentanyl crisis by increasing penalties for certain drug traffickers, certain death by distribution offenses, and for trafficking near schools and certain other public places; enhance law enforcement training and resources; upgrade and expand the Controlled Substances Reporting System; expand opioid use disorder prevention, treatment and recovery programs; appropriate funds for these purposes; and create a tax credit for businesses that hire employees who successfully complete substance use disorder training.

Senate Bill 621, *An Act for Better Education*, would reenact the sales and use tax holiday for school supplies.

Senate Bill 624, *AI Chatbots - Licensing/Safety/Privacy*, would provide for artificial intelligence chatbot licensing, safety, and privacy in North Carolina and prohibit a person from operating or distributing a chatbot that deals substantially with health information without first obtaining a health information chatbot license.

Senate Bill 625, *Protect NC Prosperity & Health*, would direct the Department of Justice to launch a two-year statewide consumer finance awareness initiative to educate the public about risks including but not limited to phishing, mail fraud, identity theft, pyramid schemes, predatory home-based business opportunities, and money transfer fraud.

Senate Bill 633, *Guarding Freedoms & Public Safety Act*, would prohibit a person convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence offense from purchasing or possessing a firearm; require a universal background check for the sale of a firearm; reenact the pistol purchase permit law; and require certification of the safe storage of firearms by parents or guardians of students in public schools.

Senate Bill 640, *AI Ethics and Literacy Across Education*, would require instruction on artificial intelligence in schools.

Senate Bill 641, *Reenact Child Tax Credit*, would reenact the child tax credit.

Senate Bill 645, *The Protect Our Schools Act*, would direct the Department of Transportation to identify school walk zones; set lower speed limits in school walk zones; increase criminal penalties for injuring a minor in a crosswalk, school zone, or school walk zone; and create and appropriate funds to the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Fund.

Senate Bill 646, *Make NC Insurrection-Free*, would make participants in the January 6th insurrection ineligible for State government employment.

Senate Bill 647, *The Child Promise Act*, would appropriate various amounts for early childhood education and childcare infrastructure and assistance to businesses providing childcare.

Senate Bill 651, The Hustle Act, would enact the North Carolina Small Business Capital Access Act to establish a comprehensive framework to expand access to capital for small businesses and Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises throughout North Carolina through coordinated loan guarantees, direct investment, support for community lenders, technical assistance, and incentives for private investment.

Senate Bill 657, Keeping Our Coaches Act, would allocate tax proceeds from sports betting to provide salary supplements for athletic coaches.

Senate Bill 659, Investing in North Carolina Act, would appropriate funds to raise salaries for teachers, State employees, community college employees, and employees of the University of North Carolina; provide a cost-of-living increase for retirees; expand the Wage\$ program statewide; and create a tax credit for qualifying employers equal to the lesser of five percent of wages paid to employees during the taxable year or \$10,000.

Senate Bill 666, 2025 Water Safety Act, would provide funds for PFAS mitigation and research, direct the Commission for Public Health to adopt standards for PFAS in drinking water, and direct the Department of Environmental Quality to adopt PFAS discharge limits for significant industrial users and publicly owned treatment works discharging directly to surface waters.

Senate Bill 667, Government Modernization, would modernize North Carolina government infrastructure through technology upgrades, cybersecurity enhancements, blockchain integration, and public service digitization.

Senate Bill 670, Drones/Certain Vendor Purchases Prohibited, would prohibit the State and any political subdivision from purchasing or otherwise acquiring any small, unmanned aircraft system manufactured or assembled by a covered foreign entity, and prohibit State funds from being used in connection with the purchase or acquisition of any small, unmanned aircraft system manufactured or assembled by a covered foreign entity, including any State funds provided through a contract, grant, or cooperative agreement.

Senate Bill 672, Protect North Carolinians from Medical Debt, would enact the Medical Debt Protection Act to limit the ability of large medical facilities to charge unreasonable interest rates and employ unfair tactics in debt collection.

Senate Bill 679, The Women's Care Act, would require the court, at the time of sentencing a pregnant female person when the court's sentence includes a term of imprisonment and the court has determined the pregnant female person poses no significant threat or danger to any person, to the community, or to any property in the community, to have the sentence deferred until at least 12 weeks after the delivery of the child or the end of the pregnancy, whichever occurs first.

Senate Bill 680, Comprehensive Capital for Childcare Expansion, would establish the North Carolina Child Care Finance Agency to, among other powers: (1) make or participate in the making of mortgage loans, construction loans, and rehabilitation loans to licensed child care providers for rehabilitation and construction;; (2) provide technical and advisory services to sponsors, builders and developers of child care facilities; and (3) acquire, hold, rent, encumber, transfer, convey, and otherwise deal with real property and utilities in the same manner as a private person or corporation, subject only to the approval of the Governor and Council of State.

Senate Bill 683, Keeping Kids and Parents Together Act, would require community-based sentencing for non-violent offenders that are the primary caretaker of a dependent child.

Senate Bill 684, Put Money to Work in Communities Act, would promote philanthropic investments in local community development programs and activities and enhance the quality of life for residents of the State by providing a tax credit for charitable gifts made by taxpayers to endowed funds held by community foundations in North Carolina.

Senate Bill 696, Limit No-Knock Warrant/Quick-Knock Entry, would require a judicial finding of probable cause to execute a no-knock search warrant and clarify that an officer serving a search warrant must wait long enough after notice for either an occupant to respond or the officer to determine that forced entry is necessary.

Senate Bill 698, Fair Districts Stronger Democracy Act, would amend the North Carolina Constitution to Provide for an Independent Redistricting Process and establish the North Carolina Independent Redistricting Commission.

Senate Bill 704, The Ronnie Long No Cap Act, would support persons erroneously convicted of felonies by removing the cap on compensation award to exonerees, allowing exonerees to receive Medicaid coverage, and requiring the Department of Adult Correction to provide appropriate transition services for exonerees.

Senate Bill 705, Limit Rules With Substantial Financial Costs, would put limitations on rules with substantial financial costs which is defined to be \$1 million dollars to all persons in a 5 year period.

Senate Bill 714, Prohibit Corporal Punishment in Schools, would prohibit corporal punishment in public schools.

Senate Bill 715, Student Voter ID Grant Program/CCs, would appropriate funds to require the State Board of Community Colleges to establish the Student Voter Identification Grant Program to provide grants to community colleges of up to \$20,000 per community college to upgrade necessary equipment and facilities to produce student identification cards that can be used to vote in person.

Senate Bill 722, Children's Online Safety Act/Funds, would enact safeguards to protect children online, establish the Online Safety Division at the Department of Justice and the Cyberbullying Unit at the State Bureau of Investigation, create the Online Child Safety Commission, and appropriate funds for those purposes.

Senate Bill 736, Foundation Act: Building NC's Housing Future, would comprehensively address housing affordability and accessibility issues and needs in the state.

Senate Bill 738, Digital Content Provenance Initiative/Funds, would establish the Digital Content Provenance Initiative to develop and implement cryptographic authentication standards for digital content across State platforms, official communications, and election-related public information, to mitigate digital misinformation that poses an escalating threat to consumers, the public trust, election integrity, and information authenticity. The initiative would also study methods to detect and deter false attribution of synthetic media to public officials, election authorities, or government agencies.

Senate Bill 744, Voucher School Accountability Act, would increase accountability and reporting standards for nonpublic schools receiving opportunity scholarship funds.

Senate Bill 747, AI Learning Agenda, would establish the Office of Artificial Intelligence Policy and the Artificial Intelligence Learning Laboratory Program to, among other duties: (1) analyze and research the benefits, risks, impacts, and policy implications of AI technologies to inform the state regulatory framework, and (2) analyze how AI technologies affect individual rights, fairness, and the public interest.

Senate Bill 757, Consumer Privacy Act, would enact a comprehensive North Carolina Consumer Privacy Act to protect consumer rights and privacy with vendors who deal in digital information.

Senate Bill 581, Revise Neglected Juvenile Definition, would amend the definition of *neglected juvenile*, so that it is not considered neglect of a juvenile if a parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker allows the juvenile to engage in independent activities without adult supervision if a reasonable and prudent parent would consider the independent activity safe and appropriate based on the juvenile's age, maturity, and physical and mental abilities. Independent activities would include: (i) travelling to and from school, including walking, running, or bicycling, (ii) travelling to and from nearby commercial or recreational facilities, (iii) remaining at home for a reasonable period of time, and (iv) playing outdoors.

Senate Bill 642, SAVE Students Act, would require public school students to receive evidence-based training on identification of warning signs of suicide, violence, and social isolation.

House Bill 636, Promoting Wholesome Content for Students, would require the State Board of Education to maintain and annually update a publicly available database of all library media and materials rejected by public school units and require the Department of Public Instruction to maintain the website where this database is made publicly available.

BILLS OF INTEREST

House Bill 555, Medicaid Telehealth Services, is identical to Senate Bill 369, summarized in the March 29, 2025, Legislative Report. **Introduced by Representative Lambeth and referred to the House Health Committee.**

House Bill 567, Ensure Access to Biomarker Testing, would ensure access to an early and accurate diagnosis of dementia in order to improve access to care and support services for, enhance the quality of life of, and reduce the financial impact of the condition on North Carolinians. **Introduced by Representatives Wheatley, Penny, Campbell, and Moss and referred to the House Health Committee.**

House Bill 568, 2025 Omnibus Labor Amendments, would provide that the Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Department of Labor is not required to publish a notice of text in the NC Register or hold a public hearing when it proposes to adopt a rule that concerns an occupational safety and health standard that is identical to a federal regulation promulgated by the Secretary of the US Department of Labor. **Introduced by Reps. K. Hall, Huneycutt, Gable and Schietzelt and referred to the House Judiciary 2 Committee.**

House Bill 584, Permit/Provisional License Modifications, would eliminate driving eligibility certificate and waiting period requirements for the issuance of learner's permits and provisional driver's licenses. **Introduced by Representatives Willis, Johnson, McNeely, and Gable and referred to the House Transportation Committee.**

House Bill 590, Patient Safety/Med. Imaging Radiation Therapy, is identical to Senate Bill 415, summarized in the April 4, 2025, Legislative Report. **Introduced by Representatives White, Potts, and Gillespie and referred to the House Health Committee.**

House Bill 612, Fostering Care in NC Act, would:

- amend the statute regarding the presentation of a juvenile at a hospital for mental health treatment: (1) changes the definition of a "director" to mean the director of the county department with custody of the juvenile, or their representative (was, the director of the county department in which the juvenile resides); and add and define *Rapid Response Team* as a Department of Health and Human Services team of representatives from all of the following: The Division of Child and Family Well-Being; The Division of Health Benefits; The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services; and The Division of Social Services;
- require the hospital, upon a juvenile in the custody of a county department presenting to a hospital for mental health treatment and present by any means other than an involuntary commitment or effective voluntary admission order, to contact and notify the director of the juvenile's presentment, and:
- require the director to contact the appropriate LME/MCO or PHP as soon as practicable, not later than 24 hours, after the juvenile's stay in the hospital to request an assessment (previously, required contact within 24 hours of the determination that the juvenile should not remain at the hospital and no appropriate placement is immediately available, to request an assessment);
- shorten the time within which the LME/MCO or PHP must arrange for the assessment to within 72 hours following notification from the director (was, within five business days);
- require the hospital to reasonably cooperate with the LME/MCO or PHP to provide access to the juvenile during the juvenile's stay in the hospital;
- following the assessment, require placement, as determined by the director, as soon as practicable and not later than five business days after the recommendation is made (was, within five business days);
- prohibit the hospital from releasing the juvenile unless the juvenile meets hospital discharge criteria and either the placement as recommended by the assessment is available, or there is consent of the juvenile or director authorized to consent to treatment;
- amend provisions regarding required notification of DHHS's Rapid Response Team when the director or LME/MCO or PHP is unable to identify an appropriate available placement after completion of the assessment, or the assessment recommendations differ to:
- require the director, an LME/MCO or PHP to notify the Rapid Response Team, if any one of the following circumstances exists, including:
 - the anticipated inability to identify an appropriate available placement or provider;
 - the assessment recommendations differ from the preferences of the individual or director authorized to consent to treatment or from services readily available;
 - there are delays in accessing needed behavioral health assessments; or
 - the juvenile has been released in violation of required criteria;
- expand the authority to allow LME/MCOs and PHPs, in addition to directors, to disclose confidential information as to the Team. Upon notification, requires the Team to determine

if action is necessary to address the immediate needs of the juvenile, and if determined necessary, requires the Team to develop a plan with the LME/MCO or PHP regarding steps to meet the juvenile's treatment needs. Require any plan to include monitoring the plan's implementation;

- limit Team meetings to members of the Team and individuals from relevant county departments, LME/MCOs, and PHPs, hospitals, or other individuals or providers that are invited by the Team, and deem meetings not public and all information shared or created at meetings or as response not public record. The bill would prohibit disclosure or redisclosure of information unless authorized by state or federal law;
- establish a monthly reporting requirement for LME/MCOs and PHPs, notifying DSS of the number of county department notifications of assessments, the length of time to find placement, and the number of recommendations at each level of care; and
- direct DHHS, by April 1, 2026, to consult with hospitals, prepaid health plans, and county departments of social services to develop and distribute uniform guidance on the roles and responsibilities of each entity involved in the delivery of case management services during a juvenile's stay in a hospital. This guidance would apply to any juvenile receiving protective services from a county department of social services regardless of the juvenile's custody status. The guidance would address, at a minimum, the following:
 - the nature, frequency, type, and duration of services offered, visitation, and other contact with the juvenile while staying in the hospital; and
 - the nature, frequency, and type of communication among each entity involved in providing services regarding ongoing treatment, referrals to potential placements, and any additional information relevant to the juvenile's services. There must be at least five days' notice of court hearings and appearances related to the juvenile.

Introduced by Representatives Chesser, Bell, Loftis, and Alston and referred to the House Health Committee.

House Bill 619, Health Care Security Act, would eliminate the statutory trigger for discontinuation of coverage for the Medicaid Expansion population if the Federal medical assistance percentage falls below ninety percent. **Introduced by Representatives Crawford, Pittman, Cohn, and Jeffers and referred to the House Rules Committee.**

House Bill 629, Extend Primary Care Task Force, is identical to Senate Bill 83, summarized in the February 18, 2025, Legislative Report. **Introduced by Representative Reeder and referred to the House Health Committee.**

House Bill 633, Expand Sickle Cell Disease Programs & Svcs, is identical to Senate Bill 283, summarized in the March 19, 2025, Legislative Report. **Introduced by Representatives T. Brown and Cunningham and referred to the House Appropriations Committee.**

House Bill 634, Parity Enhancement for Addiction Recovery, is identical to Senate Bill 566, summarized in the April 4, 2025, Legislative Report. **Introduced by Representatives T. Brown, White, Alston, and Huneycutt and referred to the House Health Committee.**

House Bill 791, Women's Safety and Protection Act, is identical to Senate Bill 516, summarized in the April 4, 2025, Legislative Report. **Introduced by Representatives Balkcom, Stevens, Rhyne, and Eddins and referred to the House Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 316, Lower Healthcare Cost. The Senate further amended the bill to specify that the quarterly report on the total costs for the described most common surgical and imaging procedures should be submitted to the statewide data processor. The new version of the bill also modifies the definition of urgent health care services pertaining to utilization reviews to include mental and behavioral health care services. **The bill has been approved by the Senate and will next be considered by the House.**

Senate Bill 509, Health Information Exchange Act Revisions, would revise the statewide health information exchange act and authorize the imposition of new civil penalties for violations of the act and also create a new state health data assessment fee. **Introduced by Sens. Hise, Burgin, and Adcock and referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.**

Senate Bill 532, Preserving Competition in Healthcare Act, would preserve competition in healthcare by regulating the consolidation and conveyance of hospitals. The bill defines hospital entity to include any licensed hospital, whether corporate or governmental, and any affiliated entity. The bill also defines transaction to include all of the following, so long as the value of the assets, control, or governance interest equals or exceeds \$5 million: 1) The sale, transfer, lease, exchange, optioning, conveyance, or other disposition of no less than 50% of the assets or operations of any hospital entity to any person or entity other than another hospital entity that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with such hospital entity; 2) the transfer of control or governance of a hospital entity to a person or entity other than another hospital entity that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with such hospital entity; 3) any binding legal obligation between two or more persons that results in a transfer of control, responsibility, or governance of no less than 50% of a hospital entity's assets to an acquiring entity; 4) any transaction, regardless of its exact form, that would be subject to review under the Article if it was structured as a purchase, merger, or joint venture; 5) any of the above transactions that is entered into by a hospital entity or by any person or entity that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with such hospital entity; or 6) dispositions of no less than 50% of a hospital entity's assets made in the course of a bankruptcy proceeding. The bill requires the State Auditor, the Attorney General, and the State Treasurer, to collectively act or decide together on any or decision that is required by them under the Article. **Introduced by Sens. Burgin, Mayfield, and Corbin and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 570, Prohibit the Corporate Practice of Medicine, would prohibit a common stakeholder between medical practices and management services organizations. The bill also provides that for a professional corporation rendering professional service pursuant to Article 1 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, no stakeholder of the professional corporation shall be a stakeholder of a management services organization with which the professional corporation shall at any time contract for services unless the management services organization is owned and held entirely by licensees in NC.

The bill also requires that any employment agreement or contract shall ensure and require that the licensee has control over all medical decisions of patient care without clinical interference from non-physicians, a stakeholder of a management services organization or an out of state physician or medical professional who is employed by or affiliated with the professional corporation.

The bill gives the NC Medical Board additional authority to review structure and ownership interest, medical decision making and patients right to access their medical records. The Medical Board may also consult with the NC Attorney General to investigate alleged violations. **Introduced by Senator Mayfield and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 579, Transforming the High School Experience, would establish the Competency-Based High School and Healthcare and High-Tech Pathways Program to create pathways that will utilize competency-based education (CBE). Pathways will result in obtaining either an associate degree or an industry recognized credential/certification/licensure based on the student's goal of employment or enrollment. Students will decide their college or career track at the end of their junior year with an initial emphasis on healthcare preparation. Mooresville Graded School District would partner with Mitchell Community College to implement the Program. **Introduced by Senators Lee, Sawyer, and Settle and referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.**

Senate Bill 600, Medicaid Agency Omnibus, would temporarily extend from 2025 to 2028 the option to determine Medicaid Marketplace enrollment for county departments of social services. The bill would also update Medicaid categorical risk levels. **Introduced by Sens. Burgin, Galey and Sawrey and referred to the Senate Health Care Committee.**

Senate Bill 613, Number of Medicaid Standard Plan Contracts, would adjust the number of Medicaid standard benefit plan contracts awarded during future award cycles. The bill provides that for any standard benefit contracts that are awarded subsequent to the initial standard benefit plan contracts, the number and nature of those contracts must be four contracts between the Division of Health Benefits and commercial plans to provide coverage to Medicaid recipients statewide. **Introduced by Sen. Sawrey and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 617, Accessing Certified Professional Midwives Act, would establish the certified professional midwives licensing act. The bill would also create the NC Council of Midwives. In addition, the bill provides that an applicant must be licensed to practice as a Certified Professional Midwife if they complete an application; complete all required educational and clinical training; submit proof to the council of current cardiopulmonary resuscitation certification and neonatal resuscitation program certification; and agrees to practice under the guidelines. **Introduced by Sens. Burgin and Murdock and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 623, First Responders' Right to Assemble, provides that first responders may bargain collectively with the governing authority of any city, town, county or other municipality. **Introduced by Sens. Bradley and Mohammed and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 668, NC Genetic Counselors Workforce Act, would establish the genetic counselors licensing board and regulate the practice of genetic counseling. **Introduced by Sens. Sawrey, and Moffitt and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 673, Protect Physicians Voices/Freedom of Movement, would make nonclinical services subject to consumer protection laws. The bill would also make it the policy of this state that health care professionals have the right to report violations of medical staff bylaws to appropriate authorities and make comments concerning patient care for the protection of the public. Adverse action would include withdrawal of hospital privileges, termination, demotion, compensation reduction., or hostile work environment.

The bill also includes limits on non-disclosure agreements by prohibiting them from including restrictions on discussing patient safety concerns with licensing agencies, accrediting bodies or other regulatory or oversight entities. Health care professionals may also not be limited in their ability to report to the appropriate authorities, violations of law, medical ethics or medical staff bylaws. And finally, the bill prohibits health care professionals employed by a hospital from

requiring a non-compete clause. **Introduced by Sens. Burgin and Mayfield and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 674, Lic. Mental Health Reciprocity/Recognition, would create reciprocity agreements for licensed clinical mental health counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, psychiatrists, and psychologists. **Introduced by Sens. Smith and Grafstein and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 729, Opt-In to Student Health, provides that a public school unit may conduct a health care screening (vision, hearing, dental, developmental) without parental consent, but shall provide a parent notice at the beginning of the school year on all screenings to be conducted and of the results of those screenings for their child. **Introduced by Sens. Bradley, Adcock and Everitt and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

Senate Bill 759, Minors Health Protection Act, is identical to House Bill 519, summarized in the April 4, 2025, Legislative Report. **Introduced by Senators Moffitt and Jones and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.**

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