

2019 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Building a **Strong and Equitable Foundation** for Our State



It is critically important the General Assembly take action to ensure **all** North Carolinians have an opportunity to share in the prosperity that has left far too many families and their communities behind. This **legislative agenda** lays out the policies and principles that can provide opportunity as well as much needed stability for the years ahead.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

Ensure the state has available revenue to support economic opportunity in every community

- Establish a graduated income tax structure that applies higher rates on higher incomes to a) ensure millionaires and the top 5 percent are contributing and b) raise the corporate income tax rate on the profits of big business to the 5.25 percent paid by everyday North Carolinians on their income.

Invest in effective programs and services that support North Carolinians with low and moderate incomes

- Establish a current services budget as a baseline for funding decisions. Document community needs and progress towards meeting them in all budget documents, including providing projections of revenue and expenditures in future years.
- Appropriate annual revenue to smart public investments after required savings are set aside to keep up with the needs of a growing state that seeks to deliver a high quality of life and compete with communities across the nation and world.
- Fund the rebuilding of Eastern North Carolina with a focus on supporting resiliency and addressing affordable housing, small businesses, and infrastructure needs.
- Eliminate the state prohibition on seeking a time limit waiver for food assistance in times and places of economic distress.

Ensure North Carolina has a fair tax system

- Reinstate the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for working families.



IMPROVE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

- Expand Medicaid for adults with incomes up to 138% of the poverty line without creating new administrative barriers that will limit enrollment.
- Prevent the proliferation of junk insurance

products that jeopardize affordability of comprehensive health coverage and protections for North Carolinians with pre-existing conditions.



ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN

Ensure all schools have adequate funding and support

- Resolve the Leandro lawsuit by providing funding necessary to meet the state constitutional requirements of providing every student a sound, basic education.
- Address the more than \$600 million shortfall in funding for school nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers by funding comprehensive wraparound supports for children, including mental health supports, to make schools safer.
- Address the current backlog of capital needs, costs associated with the K-3 class size reduction mandate, and the impacts of recent hurricanes through general appropriations and a meaningful bond referendum.
- Limit expansion of the Innovative School

District and advocate for meaningful resources targeted to low-performing schools.

- Provide waivers for districts that are unable to comply with K-3 class size mandate.
- Provide direct funding to the neediest counties and include a focus on adequacy, equity, and improved outcomes for at-risk children.
- Expand funding for N.C. Pre-K to serve all eligible children.
- Restore per-student funding for textbooks and classroom supplies – which remain 55 percent and 39 percent below pre-Recession levels, respectively.

Support teachers and well-being of students

- Support increased teacher pay, particularly for veteran teachers, and a nationally-competitive and sustainable compensation plan for teachers, principals, school administrators, and other school-based personnel.
- Modify performance pay schemes for teachers and principals to encourage, rather than discourage, placement of excellent educators where they are most needed.
- Identify programs and policies to improve

the recruitment and retention of teachers and professional staff of color.

- Increase funding to programs serving English Learners and support expanded school-community engagement, and remove arbitrary English as a Second Language funding caps.



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- Provide better data on testing, school discipline, and special education.
- Push for an evaluation of the school voucher program as well as the creation of improved requirements for accountability, transparency, and non-discrimination of voucher funds.
- Revise A-F school grading system so that it no longer stigmatizes high-need schools by emphasizing student growth rather than poverty levels and instead encourages school integration efforts.
- Support school calendar flexibility to address summer learning loss

Ensure accountability of charter schools

- Prevent efforts to segregate the public school system through local bills creating municipal charter schools or efforts to break up school districts along racial or economic lines.
- Oppose further diversion of public revenue to private education by slowing growth of charter schools following decreased performance of recently-approved charter schools.
- Substantially improve oversight of the deeply unsuccessful virtual charter schools.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT PROTECT & AID HOMEOWNERS & CONSUMERS

Increase access to safe, decent, affordable housing

- Increase recurring funding to the NC Housing Trust Fund and Workforce Housing Loan Fund.
- Allocate more Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for Neighborhood Revitalization.
- \$3 million for the Federal HOME Investment Partnership Program.
- Protect homeowners from abusive homeowner association practices.
- Fund the creation of affordable housing opportunities, especially rental housing, for disaster affected communities.



Protect consumers from abusive predatory-lending and debt-collection practices

- Oppose legislation weakening rent-to-own regulations.
- Protect existing North Carolina mortgage lending laws.
- Do not increase rates and fees on consumer finance loans or weaken consumer protections.
- Do not legalize payday lending.
- Do not legalize car title lending.
- Pass legislation that protects consumers from consumer finance lending abuses.
- Do not weaken regulation of mortgage brokers.
- Do not weaken laws against abusive debt-buyer and debt-collection practices.

Ensure people with low incomes have access to affordable, environmentally sustainable energy

- Support energy efficiency residential programs for individuals and families with low incomes.
- Oppose legislation that raises electric rates without protecting consumers with low incomes
- Support renewable energy programs.

INVEST IN NORTH CAROLINA'S WORKERS

Put North Carolinians back to work with improved programs and services

- Increase investment in economic development policies that protect wage standards and increase the number of good-paying jobs, with investments targeted at distressed communities.
- Strengthen workforce by lowering tuition for community college students and eliminating barriers to completion for occupational training programs.
- Increase state's commitment to provide affordable skills training to North Carolinians through investment in the SNAP Employment & Training program.
- Support community economic development through greater commitment to small business lending, infrastructure projects in rural communities, and regional planning that removes barriers for communities with low incomes and communities of color to connect to opportunity.



Support workers through improved unemployment, wage, and employment policies

- Ensure North Carolina's Unemployment Insurance Program adequately supports unemployed workers and the broader economy.
- Raise the North Carolina minimum wage to \$12 an hour by 2022 and \$15 an hour by 2025.
- Ensure everyone in North Carolina has access to paid family leave to welcome the birth of a child, provide extended medical care for a sick loved one, and recover from illness.
- Sustain funding for child care subsidies to provide affordable, quality child care for workers with low incomes and those pursuing work or educational training.
- Guarantee workers have a minimum number of paid sick days to care for themselves, sick children, and parents.
- Expand the definition of "family" within the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) so workers can use leave to care for siblings, grandparents or grandchildren.
- Guarantee pregnant workers who need them will be offered reasonable accommodations in order to continue working throughout their pregnancy without jeopardizing their own health or that of their baby.

Protect Low Wage Workers

- Protect workers from misclassification as independent contractors..
- Restrict the use of non-compete covenants against workers earning low wages.
- Require the provision of flush toilets in migrant housing.

PROTECT AND IMPROVE CIVIL RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO THE COURTS

- Reinstatement and increase funding for critically needed civil legal services.
- Establish a fair and non-partisan process for the review of judicial districts and the manner

in which judges are selected in North Carolina.

- End capital punishment for people with severe mental illness.

Protect immigrant and refugee communities

- Expand in-state tuition for all qualified college and university students in North Carolina, regardless of immigration status.
- Increase funding for critically needed civil legal services, particularly for victims of Hurricane Florence.
- Increase transparency and accountability for law enforcement practices and policies,

and increase training and data collection in order to discourage discriminatory policing and misconduct.



- Protect refugee resettlement programs in North Carolina and ensure all refugees are treated equally and fairly, regardless of national origin or religious beliefs.

Address barriers to reentry for individuals with criminal convictions

- Eliminate unnecessary barriers to occupational licenses for individuals with criminal records by requiring clear standards, including no denial of an occupational license for unrelated criminal conviction, and transparency so applicants know what standards are applied.
- Provide adequate funding for reentry services and local reentry councils to provide a coordinated and efficient delivery system of services to individuals with criminal records.
- Expand expunction opportunities for adults with criminal records who were treated as an adult when they were 16 or 17 years old.

- Expand eligibility for expunctions for individuals with multiple misdemeanors.
- Establish system for automation of expunctions.
- End indefinite suspension of drivers' licenses for failure to pay traffic fines.
- Establish a "Fair Chance Hiring" policy that ensures a reasonable process for considering the criminal conviction of applicants for public employment with state agencies.
- Establish fair procedures for determining ability to pay fees and fines, and an opportunity for waiver if unable to pay before any deprivation of rights

ENSURE GOOD GOVERNMENT AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE

- Establish an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw legislative and congressional districts.
- End all restrictions that disenfranchise voters.

- Expand early voting days and opportunities to vote.
- Protect all voting methods, including voting machines and absentee voting, from compromising actions.

STAFF CONTACT LIST

Rick Glazier - *Executive Director*
rick@ncjustice.org / 919-856-3193

ACCESS TO THE COURTS/CIVIL RIGHTS

- **Bill Rowe**
Deputy Director of Advocacy
bill@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2177

BUDGET & TAX

- **Alexandra Sirota**
Budget & Tax Center - Director
alexandra@ncjustice.org / 919-861-1468

CONSUMER ISSUES

- **Al Ripley**
Consumer & Housing Project - Director
al@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2573

DISASTER RELIEF

- **Bill Rowe**
Deputy Director of Advocacy
bill@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2177

EDUCATION

- **Matt Ellinwood**
Education & Law Project - Director
matt@ncjustice.org / 919-861-1465

HEALTH

- **Nicole Dozier**
Health Advocacy Project - Director
nicole@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2146

HOUSING

- **Al Ripley**
Consumer & Housing Project - Director
al@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2573
- **Bill Rowe**
Deputy Director of Advocacy
bill@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2177

IMMIGRATION

- **Dani Moore**
Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project - Director
dani@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2178

NON-PARTISAN REDISTRICTING

- **Bill Rowe**
Deputy Director of Advocacy
bill@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2177

REENTRY/CRIMINAL JUSTICE ISSUES

- **Daniel Bowes**
Staff Attorney
danielb@ncjustice.org / 919-861-2061
- **Bill Rowe**
Deputy Director of Advocacy
bill@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2177

WORKERS' RIGHTS

- **Allan Freyer**
Workers' Rights Project - Director
allan@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2151
- **Bill Rowe**
Deputy Director of Advocacy
bill@ncjustice.org / 919-856-2177