



Moving North Carolina Forward -
2024 PEOPLE-FIRST POLICY AGENDA



NORTH CAROLINA
JUSTICE CENTER



Mission Statement

The NC Justice Center is dedicated to transforming North Carolina’s prosperity into opportunity for all. Our mission is to eliminate poverty in North Carolina by ensuring every household in the state has access to the resources, services, and fair treatment it needs to achieve economic security.

To make opportunity and prosperity for all a reality, we work toward:

Jobs that are safe, pay a living wage, and provide benefits

Access to quality and affordable health care

Quality public education for every child

Consumer protections from abusive practices

Safe and affordable housing

Public investments that expand opportunities for economic security

A just and stable revenue system that adequately funds public investments while fairly distributing tax responsibility

A fair and non-discriminatory criminal justice system, from arrest to reentry

Equitable treatment for everyone in North Carolina—regardless of race, ethnicity, country of origin, citizenship status, religion, disability, age, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation

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MARCH 2024



THE 2024 “SHORT” LEGISLATIVE SESSION presents an opportunity for the General Assembly to reconsider our state’s budget and tax plan and take important actions to ensure all North Carolinians have an opportunity to share in prosperity.

This agenda reflects policy choices that will expand access to robust public educational opportunities, meaningful work opportunities, and critical safety net supports to insulate households and local economies against a potential downturn. Our recommendations seek to strengthen consumer protections, safeguard the dignity of all North Carolinians, and ensure stability for the years ahead.

□ Ensure the state has available revenue to support economic opportunity

- Repeal scheduled reductions in corporate income tax rates; hold at the current and regionally competitive rate of 2.5 percent.
- Repeal scheduled reductions in individual income tax rates; hold at the current rate, 4.5 percent.
- Establish a progressive individual income tax structure with higher rates for those who can afford to pay more.
- Oppose [HB 146](#), the *Taxpayer Protection Act*, a constitutional amendment that would limit state's ability to generate revenue into the future.



▣ Advance equitable economic stabilization strategies and safety net supports

- ▣ Support [HB 666/SB 736](#), *Expand Income Tax Assistance in NC*, to optimize take up of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.
- ▣ Oppose [HB 747](#), *No Work Requirement Exemption/ FNS Benefits*; should this measure become law, it would result in costly administrative burdens on local Departments of Social Services and limit the impact of Food and Nutrition Services.



□ Reform North Carolina's Unemployment Insurance program to support workers and insulate the broader economy

- Support [SB 536](#), *UI/Establish Short-Time Compensation in NC*, which would establish a program that allows companies to avoid laying off employees during a downturn.





❑ Improve wages and benefits for workers so they can meet the needs of their families

- ❑ Support [HB 496](#), *NC Work and Save*, a bill to establish a small business retirement savings program.
- ❑ Oppose [HB 614](#), *Amend Constitution/Right to Work*, a constitutional amendment that would chill the expansion of unions.



Improve worker safety

-  Ensure that NCDOL can swiftly adopt regulations published by Federal OSHA to protect workers.
-  Adopt regulations to safeguard agricultural workers and other professions from heat stress and airborne infectious diseases.



▣ Protect the well-being of North Carolinians by improving health care systems

- ▣ Support [SB 321](#), *Medical Debt De-Weaponization Act*, model legislation that would strengthen consumer protections against medical debt and require large healthcare facilities to provide patients with a financial assistance policy and post price information.



□ Provide increased access to economic opportunity and protection for those in the immigrant community

- Oppose [HB 167](#), *Community Action ID Card Restrictions*; this bill specifically targets community IDs as a prohibited form of identification.
- Oppose [HB 10](#), *Require Sheriffs to Cooperate with ICE*, an anti-immigrant bill that circumvents the local authority of sheriffs by requiring them to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).



□ Support programs that protect and aid tenants, homeowners, and consumers

- Increase funding for the NC Housing Trust Fund and Workforce Housing Loan Fund.
- Support [HB 542](#), *HOA Revisions*; strengthens safeguards to prevent abusive practices by home owners associations (HOAs).
- Support [HB 481](#), *Modernize Debt Settlement Prohibition*; strengthens consumer protections against debt settlement companies.
- Oppose [HB 866](#), *Earned Wage Access Services*, a measure that would authorize a product similar to payday lending.
- Oppose [SB 176](#), *Consumers in Crisis Protection Act*; this bill would authorize consumer legal funding, a high cost, predatory product.
- Oppose [HB 551](#), *Landlord-*



Tenant Changes which would prohibit local governments from enacting ordinances to prevent discrimination based on source of income.

- Oppose legislation that would weaken protections for North Carolina utility customers.

□ Promote opportunity for and protect people who are currently or have been incarcerated, and improve fairness and equity in the justice system

□ Support [SB 565](#), *Remove Barriers to Jobs and Housing*; this measure includes important provisions to streamline the automatic expunction process.

□ Support [HB 888](#), *Remove Barriers to Employment from Court Debt*, a bill that would eliminate driver's license suspensions due to failure to pay or failure to appear.

□ Support [HB 778](#), *Prohibition on Disclosing Booking Photographs*; this bill offers a meaningful step in regulating the use of booking photos.

□ Support [SB 339](#), *Modify Limited Driving Privilege/Criminal Laws*; this bill would significantly decrease the number of people with collateral suspensions from obtaining additional traffic violations while their license is already suspended.



□ Oppose [SB 303](#), *Strengthen Juvenile Laws*, a measure that significantly undermines the 2019 Raise the Age Law by allowing certain 16- and 17-year-olds to be automatically transferred to adult court.

□ Support the state’s public education systems

- Fully fund the *Leandro* Comprehensive Remedial Plan and reverse the diversion of public revenue from public to private education.
- Support [HB 342](#) Bipartisan proposal to provide funding to support our state’s highly stressed childcare system, prepare for the expiration of federal COVID relief funding, and protect high quality standards for childcare.
- Support [HB 849](#), *Expand & Enhance Teaching Fellows Program*; this measure expands eligibility and increases loan forgiveness amounts to build out the successful Teaching Fellows Program.
- Oppose [HB 17](#), *Elect the SBE/SPI as Chair*; constitutional amendment that would change the composition of our State Board of Education.
- Oppose [HB 188](#), *Standards of*



Student Conduct; this bill would remove examples of minor student misconduct that should not lead to the use of exclusionary school discipline; oppose further efforts to use exclusionary tactics to over-criminalize student misbehavior.

- Oppose [HB 187](#), *Equality in Education*, North Carolina’s version of anti-CRT legislation that would

▣ Support the state’s public education systems *(Continued)*

discourage honest discussions of the history of discrimination.

- ▣ Support [SB 368](#), *Enable Opportunity Scholarship Reporting*; this bill would improve oversight and accountability of the Opportunity Scholarship voucher program.
- ▣ Require the taking of attendance and audit virtual charter schools to ensure schools are complying

with truancy laws and children are receiving the required level of educational opportunities.

- ▣ Support affirmative vision for parents’ and students’ rights to safe learning environments with the resources needed to provide all families with meaningful educational opportunities.

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