

*****SPAM*** Latest Updates from the NCGA**



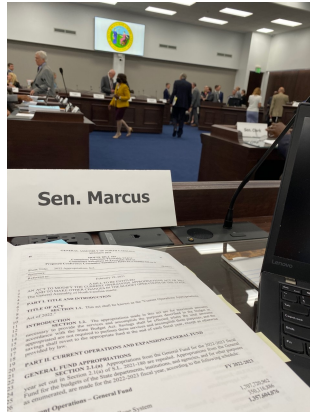
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NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

July 8, 2022

Senator Marcus Statement on the Budget



This was the view from my seat at the Joint Base Budget Committee meeting on June 29. We saw the 636 page budget for the first time on June 28th, met once for staff to present the highlights, and had to vote yes or no on June 30 (no amendments allowed).

We have a huge revenue surplus this biennium, which gave us an opportunity during the short session to make smart investments for our future and help people who are still recovering from the pandemic and dealing with increased costs due to inflation. The budget writers missed those opportunities and instead presented a budget that falls far short of what North Carolinians need and deserve.

First, the budget **squirrels away \$1 billion in a new creation that Republicans call an Inflation Reserve Fund** for the state to use later, without giving teachers and state employees enough for them to keep up with inflation and save for themselves. Educators and State workers are already leaving their jobs for better pay elsewhere and we have significant difficulty filling these positions. These tiny 1% raises do not even keep up with inflation.

The budget finally moves to \$15/hour for non-certified school employees, which is too little too late, since most private employers are offering at least \$15/hour starting wage and the average in North Carolina is about \$21/hour (and even higher in counties like Mecklenburg).

The budget **funds only about half of what the Leandro Plan requires** for FY22-23 in order to provide all children in North Carolina with a **sound, basic education**. The budget also **unfairly disadvantages Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools** by cutting CMS out of the salary supplement provisions. CMS has many unfilled positions and needs assistance as much as any other district in the state to fill those positions.

While underfunding public education, the budget includes a lot more **money for private school vouchers and allows wealthy families to send their children to private school with taxpayers' money, including families of four who make up to \$103,000 per year**. The voucher program is already funded way beyond demand, yet the budget increases those appropriations by millions each year. **To compare public vs. private school funding, this budget increases public school funding by only 6% and private school funding by 59%**. (For an article about how Alabama is doing a much better job than North Carolina on teacher pay, [click here](#).)

I also object to the **massive spending to support the fake medical clinics known as crisis pregnancy centers**. There is \$3,085,000 more to fund these organizations whose mission is to shame pregnant women, lie to them, preach to them, and dissuade them through any means necessary from choosing abortion. That money should be going to evidence-based healthcare providers and clinics, so that women facing an unexpected pregnancy can get real, honest help and information about all of their options.

Republicans know what resources the NC Board of Elections needs to conduct **fair, safe and secure elections**. But they have nevertheless refused to fund the bare minimum. This budget will **force the elimination of employees who protect our election system from cyber-attacks and make online voter registration and other services available**.

Republicans also refused to give North Carolinians a break on gas prices with a rebate as Democrats proposed in [SB897](#).

This budget keeps in place the **unfair cap on Powell Bill funding for Charlotte**, undermining the city's ability to maintain our streets and bridges.

Republicans included lots of money for projects in their own districts but have **refused to include any of my district's needs**, not even a mere \$150,000 to research why there are so many cases of **ocular melanoma**, a rare cancer of the eye, in the Huntersville area. There's nothing for the **Smithville Revitalization Plan** either. It's offensive that budget writers refuse year after year to spend a single penny to help us solve this medical mystery or to save a historically Black neighborhood.

Finally, I am disappointed that **Republicans put this budget together without any Democratic input, in private meetings for weeks, with no Democratic members allowed in the room**. Then they presented it via a conference report, so we could not even offer amendments. It's no surprise that it ignores so many needs in the blue areas of our state and ignores so many things that Democrats care about – like **Medicaid expansion** to close the healthcare coverage gap, funding for public education per the court order in Leandro, fair and secure elections, and helping working families make ends meet.

This budget is inadequate in so many ways. I voted no.

Noteworthy Votes



Below is a list of some of the noteworthy bills I voted on during the past 2 weeks. You can see a full list of the bills I have introduced and voted on since the start of the biennium [here](#).

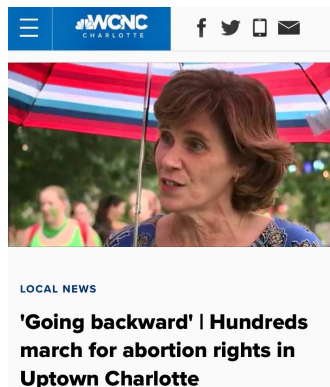
Noteworthy Bills I Voted YES on:

- **[SJR917, Adjournment Resolution](#)**. The North Carolina Senate has adjourned for Short Session until the end of July. It looks like we will return once a month for the rest of the year. You can read more about what could be ahead for the rest of the year [here](#).
- **[SB455, Conform Hemp with Federal Law](#)**. Bipartisan bill that allows hemp to remain legal in North Carolina by conforming our hemp laws with federal law, permanently excluding hemp from the State Controlled Substances Act. I know this was a great concern to CBD-product users, hemp farmers, and small business owners across the state and want to thank everyone who took the time to email and call the office to express support for the bill. The Governor signed this bill into law immediately, to avoid having hemp become illegal on July 1.
- **[HB560, Public Safety Reform](#)**. Makes various changes to laws involving public safety, including authorizing the Secretary of Public Safety to assign probation officers to perform additional duties during a declared state of emergency or a natural disaster and increasing the amount of allowable expenses related to funeral, cremation, and burial under the Crime Victims Compensation Fund. The Governor has already signed this bill into law.
- **[HB674, Require DNA for Various Convictions](#)**. Adds additional offenses to the list of offenses requiring submission of a DNA sample after a conviction or a finding of not guilty by reason of insanity and clarifies that medical facilities and medical professionals cannot bill sexual assault victims for forensic medical examinations. **I am happy to report that my bill [SB900](#) was incorporated into HB674 as an amendment, to increase the amount paid by the Assistance Program for Victims of Rape and Sex Offenses to a medical facility for rape kits.** I am proud to have worked with a bipartisan team of legislators to have this important amendment included. You can read more about the bill [here](#). The Governor has already signed this bill into law.
- **[HB768, 2022 ABC Omnibus](#)**. Repeals the limited winery permit, repeals purchase transportation permit and commercial transportation permit, allows alcohol sales at professional sporting events occurring at a stadium on the campus of certain community colleges, amends the definition of "private bar" to eliminate the membership requirement, and allows a distillery to obtain mixed beverages catering permits. You can read more about the bill [here](#). The Governor has already signed this bill into law.
- **[HB791, Lic. Counselors Compact/DHHS Contracting](#)**. Makes North Carolina a member of the Counseling Compact, an interstate licensure compact for licensed professional counselors and implements contract reform within DHHS.
- **[HB823, Child Advocacy Centers/Share Information](#)**. Establishes criteria for Children's Advocacy Centers to receive State funds, requirements for the sharing of information and access to records held by Children's Advocacy Centers and multidisciplinary teams, immunity from liability for certain circumstances for the multidisciplinary team, individuals and volunteers working for a Children's Advocacy Center.
- **[HB1008, Sex Offender/Probation/Victims Changes](#)**. Makes clarifying changes to sex offender registration process, allows judges to delegate to probation officers a limited amount of authority to reduce terms of supervised probation, allows for warrantless searches of individuals on post-release supervision, and expands rental protections for victims of certain crimes.

Noteworthy Bills I Voted NO on:

- **[SB101, Require Cooperation with ICE 2.0](#)** (for concurrence). I was disappointed to see this harmful bill come back to the Senate for another vote. The bill makes it harder for local law enforcement officers to do their job by undermining relationships with victims and witnesses and also would instill fear in immigrant communities. It attempts to force local sheriffs to do the work of ICE agents.
- **[HB49, Concealed Carry Permit Lapse/Revise Law](#)**. Would allow a concealed carry permittee with a lapsed permit to get an automatic extension and avoid having to take another firearms safety and training course upon applying for renewal. I spoke against this bill on the Senate floor. In the wake of the mass shootings in Buffalo, Uvalde, Highland Park, and more, we should not be relaxing gun safety protections. **I hope the Governor will veto this bill.**
- **[HB103, 2022 Appropriations Act](#)** (conference report for adoption). The 636 page "short session" budget -- full comments in the section above.

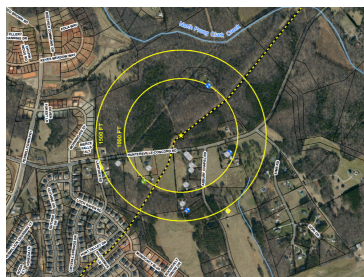
[Dobbs Decision Interview](#)



I spoke to Queen City News last week about the *Dobbs* decision and the future of abortion access in our state. The interview is now posted on their website and you can watch it [here](#).

I also spoke at a rally in Charlotte last weekend in support of abortion rights and SB888, my bill to Codify the Protections of Roe and Casey in NC. You can see WCNC's coverage of that rally [here](#).

Colonial Pipeline Leak Updates



NCDEQ and the Attorney General reached a **Consent Agreement with Colonial Pipeline to resolve the outstanding issues at the gasoline contamination in the Oehler Nature Preserve in Huntersville**. The agreement is subject to court approval later this month. It has many provisions, the most significant of which are:

1. Colonial must continue to monitor, test and clean up the site, and pay stipulated penalties if they do not do so on time.
2. Colonial must pay a **civil penalty of \$4.5 million plus \$250,000 for investigative costs**.

State law requires that the **penalties collected go toward state public education funding**. Individual homeowners who have incurred costs and damage are pursuing private litigation.

Colonial Pipeline is not required to make any additional payments in this case, but is **considering making one or more donations to help the community feel somewhat compensated for the damage done**. They are considering things like public art, parks, or local non-profits. They have asked for input. **If you have ideas for what Colonial could do in this regard, please let me know and I'll pass your input along.**

You can read more about the consent agreement [here](#).

Interview with Queen City News on Protecting the Mental Health of LGBTQ Youth



As part of its Pride Month coverage, Queen City News did a story about my bill, [Senate Bill 392](#), the Mental Health Protection Act. As I discuss in the piece, this vital bill would **prohibit licensed therapists from performing the dangerous practice of conversion therapy** on minors and adults who cannot legally consent to it. The article also includes an interview with Reverend Tara Gibbs from Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, who speaks about the **importance of advocating for LGBTQ youth**. I'm grateful this bill is receiving press, even as the headlines are overwhelmed by the terrible news about multiple mass shootings and the Dobbs decision, which also threatens equal rights for people in the LGBTQ community. You can see the story [here](#).

Meeting with Democracy NC



Last week, college interns with [Democracy NC](#) met with legislators for their lobby day. They are advocating for [SB916](#), the **Safeguard Fair Elections Act**, of which I am proud to be a co-sponsor. It was great to join Senator Chaudhuri, Senator Murdock, and Representative Smith to talk to these passionate advocates about protecting our democracy.

Ocular Melanoma Research

I have some good news regarding ocular melanoma research. The North Carolina at Chapel Hill's North Carolina Collaboratory will be working in conjunction with researchers at the School of Medicine to develop and test **a new treatment for ocular melanoma (uveal cancer)**. This project will seek to develop **a novel gene therapy-based strategy that effectively treats primary uveal melanoma lesions to preserve vision and increase survival rates**. The funding for the project started on July 1, 2022 and will last for two years. I am hopeful we can find a way to treat OM before it takes any more lives in our community or elsewhere. Of course, I will continue to fight for funding to determine what is causing so many people in our area to develop OM in the first place.

More information on the project will be added to the Collaboratory's website soon.

Governor Cooper Signs Executive Order to Protect Abortion Rights in North Carolina



This week Governor Cooper signed an [Executive Order](#) that takes several steps to defend access to reproductive health services in North Carolina. Due to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, **North Carolina will become a critical access point for patients from neighboring states seeking abortion care.** North Carolina is already seeing an influx of patients. According to Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, one third of the patients on their schedule in clinics in North Carolina are from out of state this week. That means there are projected to be at least 10,000 people coming to North Carolina to access reproductive health care services, mostly from states with bans and tighter restrictions. These are just numbers from Planned Parenthood, and do not include estimates from the state's other trusted providers.

The Executive Order helps protect North Carolina doctors, nurses and their patients. It directs Cabinet agencies to coordinate to protect reproductive health care services across the state. As a result of this Order, Cabinet agencies cannot require a pregnant state employee to travel to a state where there are not protections for the health of the pregnant person. It directs the Department of Public Safety to work with law enforcement to ensure enforcement of a state law that prohibits anyone from blocking access to a health care facility. The Order also provides protections against extradition for those seeking or providing reproductive health care services in North Carolina and prohibits Cabinet agencies from cooperating in investigations initiated by other states into anyone obtaining or providing reproductive health care that is legal North Carolina. This Order will help make sure patients get the care they need in North Carolina. You can read more about the Executive Order [here](#).

NC Policy Watch Interview



Sen. Natasha Marcus

I recorded a podcast with NC Policy Watch to discuss the Dobbs decision, the future of abortion access in NC, and my bill, [SB888](#), and the **importance of codifying *Roe v. Wade* into state law.** We also discussed the **status of LGBTQ rights in North Carolina** and my bill, [Senate Bill 392](#), the Mental Health Protection Act, which would outlaw the dangerous practice of conversion therapy in NC. You can listen to the full interview [here](#).

Free "Community Refrigerator" Open to All at the Ada Jenkins Center



Davidson now has a **free community refrigerator at the [Ada Jenkins Center](#)** to provide fresh produce to community members thanks to Drew Pappas, a local Eagle Scout. He collaborated with Heidi Acker, the Ada Jenkins Center food pantry coordinator, to develop and execute the project. Thank you Drew and Heidi for providing this important resource to our community! You can read more about the project [here](#).

The Community Fridge is located at 212 Gamble Street. It has a child safety lock, but otherwise is open to everyone 24 hours a day, year-round. No referrals needed.

Mecklenburg County GRADE Applications



Mecklenburg County Air Quality is accepting [GRADE applications](#) -- Grants to Replace Aging Diesel Engines. GRADE is designed to **reduce oxides of nitrogen (NOx), an ozone forming air pollutant**, by providing businesses and organizations funding incentives to replace or repower heavy-duty non-road equipment with newer, cleaner, less polluting engines. You can access the application [here](#) -- the deadline is September 30, 2022.

AARP Survey for North Carolinians Ages 45+



AGE MY WAY NC
We Want to Hear from YOU!

Soon, one in five North Carolinians will be over 65 - more older adults than children for the first time ever.

Age My Way NC is surveying people ages 45 and older all across the state to identify priorities such as safe and walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.



Take a few minutes to complete the Age My Way NC survey, using the QR code or link below to help identify your priorities.
bit.ly/AgMyWayNC



Age My Way NC is a collaborative effort between the State of North Carolina and AARP NC to help identify priorities for making our neighborhoods, towns, cities, and rural areas great places for people of all ages.

Age My Way NC, a collaborative effort between the State of North Carolina and AARP-NC, is **requesting survey responses from North Carolinians 45 and older to offer their thoughts on priorities for their communities**, including safe and walkable streets, age-friendly housing, transportation options, and more.

Soon one in five North Carolinians will be over 65. There will be more older adults than children for the first time ever. This survey will help policymakers understand and focus on projects that can make NC communities livable for people of all ages.

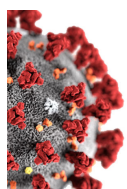
Take the Survey

Free Fans Available



It's hot! Mecklenburg County residents can get a free box fan if you're 60+ or 18+ and receive disability income. Reserve your fan at a location near you at [this link](#).

COVID-19 & Monkeypox Updates



COVID-19
INFORMATION
AND UPDATES

The [DHHS COVID-19 Dashboard](#), which is updated weekly every Wednesday, shows the following data points:

- Wastewater testing has shown a **decrease** to 15.8m particles, compared to 16.4m last week.
- COVID-like illness in hospital emergency departments **remained fairly constant**, moving from 5% to 4.9%.
- COVID-19 reported cases for the week **increased** to 24,613 from 23,544.
- COVID-19 hospital admissions of COVID-19 patients this week **increased** to 889, compared to last week which was 831.
- Booster rates are 58% for the total population. We have 77% of adults with at least one dose and 29% of children and teens ages 5-17 with at least one dose.
- The Omicron variant continues to represent the vast majority of COVID diagnoses. BA.2.12.1 represents 49% of cases, BA.5 29%, BA.4 12%, and BA.2 11%.

For more information about how vaccines for children work and where you can find a vaccination appointment nearby, visit [MySpot.nc.gov](#). The North Carolina COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center can also help you make an appointment by calling **888-675-4567**. The help center is open 7 a.m.-7 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m.-4 p.m. on weekends.

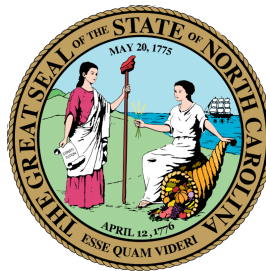
Monkeypox vaccines are free and available in Mecklenburg County, but currently in limited quantities. If you are experiencing symptoms or believe you have been exposed, contact your doctor or local health department. In Mecklenburg, that number is 980-314-9400. More information about monkeypox is available on the CDC website.

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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

Senator Natasha Marcus | [Website](#)



Your copy should address 3 key questions: Who am I writing for? (Audience) Why should they care? (Benefit) What do I want them to do here? (Call-to-Action)

Create a great offer by adding words like "free" "personalized" "complimentary" or "customized." A sense of urgency often helps readers take an action, so think about inserting phrases like "for a limited time only" or "only 7 remaining!"

Sen. Natasha Marcus, District 41 | 300 N. Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC 27603

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