

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



From Sen. Natasha Marcus <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>
Date 2024-05-31 16:38



NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

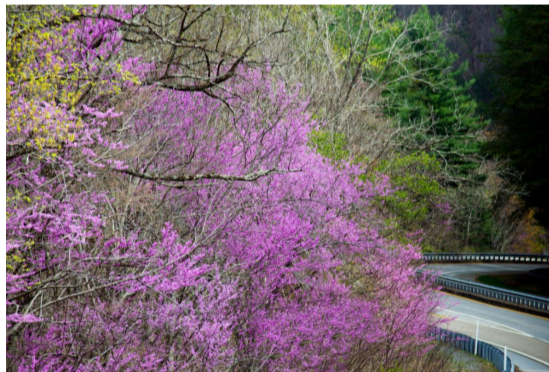
May 31, 2024

Quiet Legislative Weeks



There was very little legislative activity in Raleigh over the past two weeks, in large part due to the death of House Speaker Tim Moore's father. That news prompted both chambers to cancel all votes and most committee meetings for the entire week. Also, the negotiations between House and Senate Republicans are either slow or at a standstill. We are hopeful they will invest a decent portion of our state budget surplus in our public schools and state employees, and in other worthwhile projects, but they are not speaking publicly about their competing priorities yet. Learn more [here](#).

Governor's Veto: HB198, DOT Legislative Changes



Last week, Governor Cooper vetoed [HB198, DOT Legislative Changes](#). I voted "NO" when the bill came to the Senate floor, and I will vote to uphold the Governor's veto should an override vote be held. If enacted, this bill would almost double the area that can be cut down near billboards, override local ordinances to save vegetation, and remove protections for North Carolina's native eastern redbud trees. In addition to these provisions, the bill also increases the maximum total for unpaid toll processing fees by 50%, from \$48 per year to \$72. Earlier this year, the Governor signed an executive order that set goals for protecting and restoring North Carolina's natural areas, and I support those goals. Learn more [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Update on HB237: Banning Masks Worn for Health & Safety

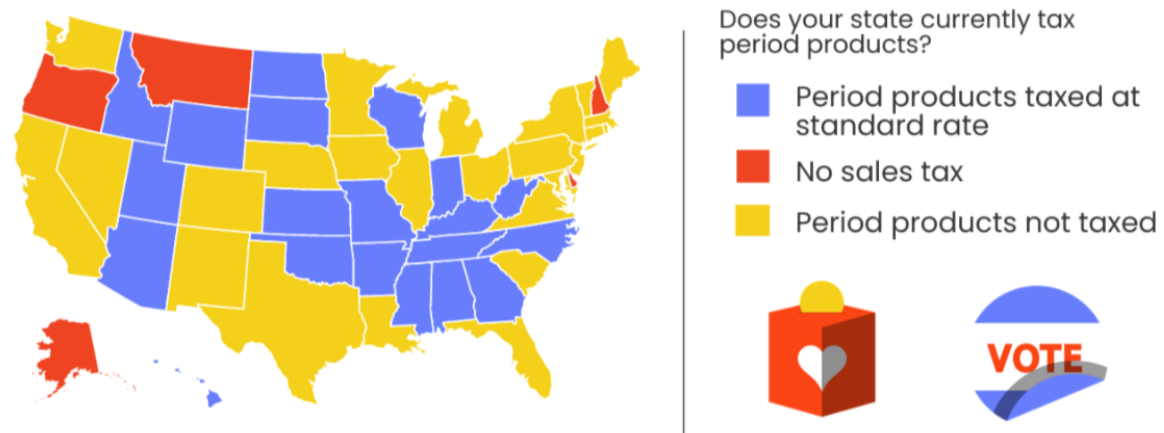


Earlier this month, I spoke in the Judiciary Committee and on the Senate Floor in strong opposition to HB237, which would revoke a law allowing masks to be worn in public to protect the health of oneself and others and make **it a Class 1 misdemeanor to do so**.

Just last week, the House Speaker announced that the pressure from the public outcry succeeded and that the bill will be amended. The House voted last Wednesday not to concur with the bill in its current form, which means that they will likely amend it in a private conference committee before it goes to the Governor's desk. Learn more [here](#).

Progress on Efforts to Repeal Menstrual Products Tax

Sales Tax on Period Products Purchases by State



As I have done in previous sessions, I filed a bill this session, [SB831](#), to repeal the tax on period products in North Carolina. Several states recognize that these products are not luxury items and should not be taxed as such. We are encouraged that our movement is being adopted even in conservative states like South Carolina, which recently became **one of 25 states in the U.S.** to exempt menstrual products from sales tax. I hope that North Carolina will follow suit. Learn more [here](#).

Senate Judiciary Committee Updates



The following noteworthy bills were discussed in the Senate Judiciary Committee over the past two weeks:

- **HB250, Death by Distribution/Good Samaritan/Autopsy.** A Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) was discussed regarding this bill last week but was not voted on. This PCS would limit family and public access to death records in any case under criminal investigation, and autopsy results in cases that could be homicides would not be released until criminal charges were filed. Additionally, cases in which law enforcement officers are involved in the death of members of the public would be included in this new prohibition. The bill also weakens the independent nature of North Carolina's medical examiner system by establishing that District Attorneys have agency over the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and local medical examiners. Both the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice have concerns regarding the bill's language. We expect changes to come before the bill is heard again next week. Learn more [here](#).
- **HB495, Aggregation of Multiple Financial Crimes.** A Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) was discussed regarding this bill last week but was not voted on. This PCS would create a state criminal offense of "money laundering," and would make modifications to strengthen retail theft laws.

Senate Commerce/Insurance Committee Updates



The following noteworthy bills were discussed in the Senate Commerce/Insurance Committee over the past two weeks:

- **SB802, C-PACE Program.** Establishes the commercial property assessed capital expenditure program ("C-PACE Program") to be administered by the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina ("EDPNC") under the supervision of the Department of Commerce. Under the C-PACE Program, owners of qualifying commercial property could apply to EDPNC to be approved for long-term financing provided by private lenders to pay for property improvements that would include **energy efficiency, water conservation, renewable energy, and resilience measures**. I am a co-sponsor of this bill.

North Carolina Department of Public Safety: VIPER Quarterly Report



As a member of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, I received a report from the North Carolina State Highway Patrol on VIPER, the Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders, the mobile voice and data communications network that allows all North Carolina law enforcement and public safety agencies to communicate with each other regardless of location. The most salient details are below:

- VIPER is nearing the completion of the final tower site identified as necessary in the 2004 Legislative Report. Using modern mapping programs, VIPER has determined that an additional 31 sites are needed in Western North Carolina to meet the program's minimum street coverage percentage (95%).
- The system currently supports 183,588 emergency users.
- This quarter saw the growth of more than 3,160 additional user radios.
- The NC Highway Patrol has begun tracking the number of county console sites directly connected to VIPER. Currently, there are 57. There are four counties with orders for consoles, and the agency anticipates that those will be filled before the end of 2024.
- VIPER has experienced an increase in site damage at the hands of criminals within the last few years, including a recent occurrence resulting in \$20K worth of damages.

Learn more about VIPER [here](#).

2024 Prison Population Projections

Table 1
Prison Population Projections and Capacity

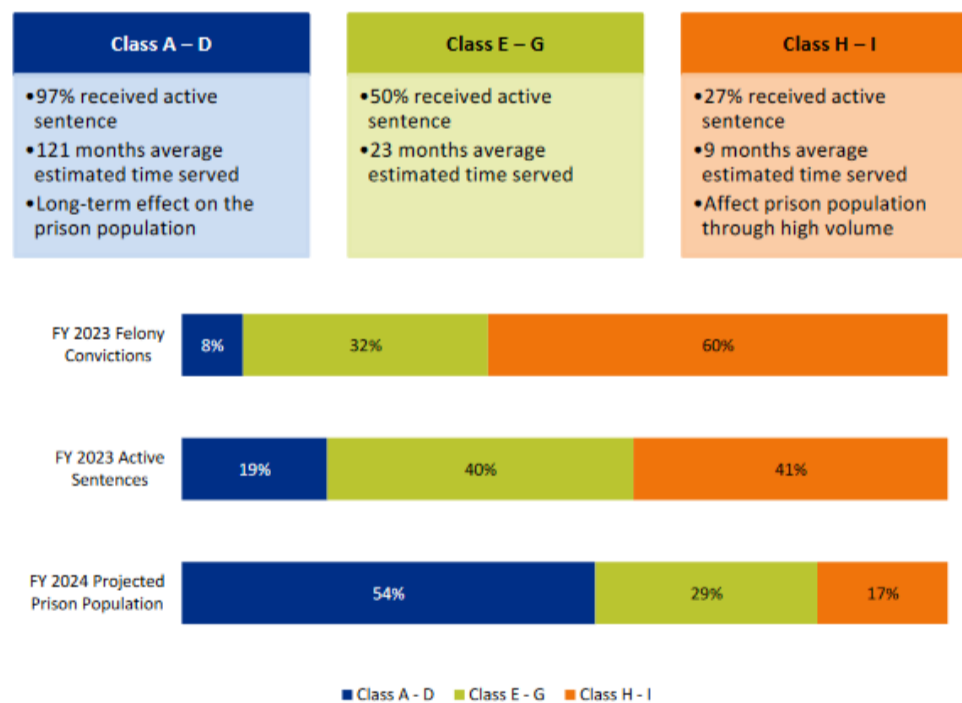
Fiscal Year End	Prison Population ¹		Prison Capacity ^{2,3,4}		Difference between Current Projection and EOC ⁷
	Previous Projection	Current Projection	Standard Operating Capacity ⁵	Expanded Operating Capacity ⁶	
2024	30,437	31,672	31,284	35,860	4,188
2025	30,763	31,950	31,284	35,860	3,910
2026	31,162	32,309	31,284	35,860	3,551
2027	31,525	32,923	31,284	35,860	2,937
2028	31,886	33,417	31,284	35,860	2,443
2029	32,319	34,000	31,284	35,860	1,860
2030	32,812	34,399	31,284	35,860	1,461
2031	33,225	34,782	31,284	35,860	1,078
2032	33,680	35,190	31,284	35,860	670
2033	N/A	35,745	31,284	35,860	115

Note: Prepared in conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (DAC).

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Justice and Public Safety, I received a report from the North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission on the simulation model used to assist in the determination of long-term resource needs and aid in prison population management. The most salient details are below:

- The prison population is projected to increase from 31,672 in June 2024 to 35,745 in June 2033 (13%). **This projection is approximately 4% higher than the previous projection** due to increases in Class A-G felony convictions.
- For the majority of the last 10 years, the accuracy of the prison population projections has been within 2% of the actual population at the end of the fiscal year, with the exception of FY 2020 and 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on court and correctional systems.
- Class A-D felonies, the most serious felony offenses, account for 54% of the projected prison population, but represent only 8% of felony convictions and 19% of active sentences overall.
- Class H-I felonies, the least serious felony offenses, account for 17% of the projected prison population despite accounting for 60% of felony convictions and 41% of active sentences. This is due to a lower rate of active sentences and a shorter average time served.

Figure 4
Dynamics of Sentences Imposed and the Prison Population
FY 2023 Felony Convictions and FY 2024 Projected Prison Population



Note: Mandatory active sentence required with limited exceptions for Class A through D felonies.
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission and NC Department of Adult Correction

Read the full report [here](#).

Applications Open for Mecklenburg Pre-K

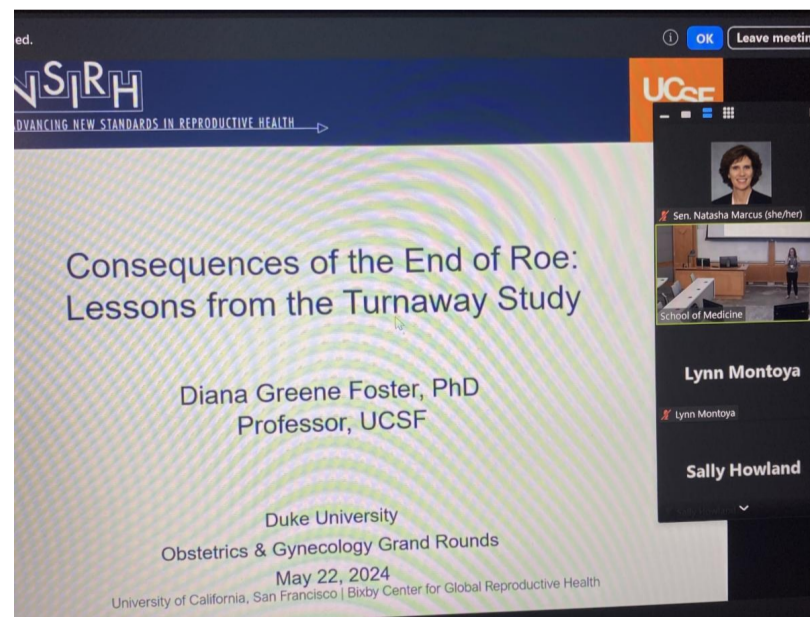


Applications for the 2024-2025 MECK Pre-K School Year opened on January 16, 2024, and will remain open until January 2025. Placement into classrooms began in April in the order they were received and will continue until each site is full. In order to apply, you must provide basic information about your child and your household. This information includes an official document certifying your child's legal name and birth date, a government-issued parent ID, and a document proving residency in Mecklenburg County. A list of acceptable documents for proof of residency can be found inside the application. You will also search for and indicate your preferred locations for attendance based on sites currently available. Apply [here](#). If you are unable to apply online, email info@MECKPreK.org or call (704) 943-9585 to schedule an appointment to apply in person. Learn more [here](#).

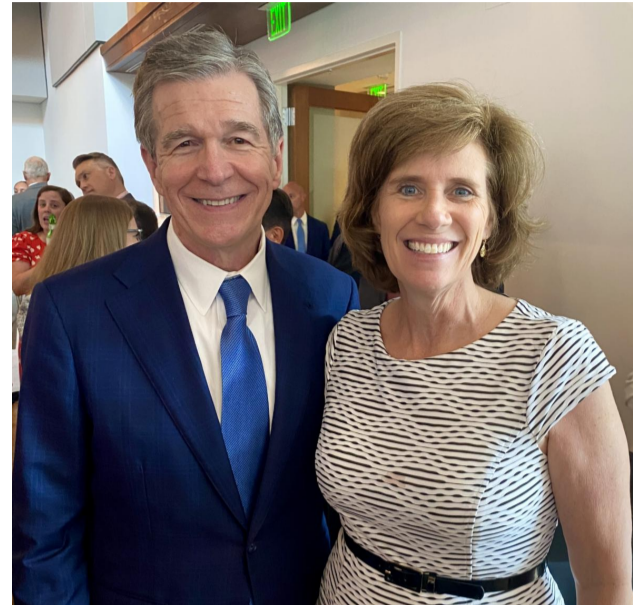
Senator Marcus in Raleigh and the Community



Several of my colleagues were honored by the [NC League of Conservation Voters](#) (NCLCV) at their Green Tie Awards event last week, most notably Rep. Pricey Harrison, after whom they named the Defender of the Environment Award! Attorney General Josh Stein was the keynote speaker (and won the Green Tie award when he was in the NCGA). Such a verdant evening! Congratulations to all the winners and thank you to the NCLCV for your advocacy for a greener NC!



Last week, I attended a lecture by the author of *The Turnaway Study*, Dr. Diana Greene Foster whose work is affiliated with [Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health \(ANSIRH\)](#), hosted by OBGYN doctors at Duke on the consequences of overturning *Roe v. Wade* and the findings of the study. Some key findings of Dr. Foster's study include that, when women choose abortion but are denied one, outcomes are worse for her, the child she is forced to have, and other children in the household.



I joined Governor Cooper at the Southeast U.S./Japan Association's (SEAUS/Japan) reception in Charlotte to celebrate Japanese business expansion in North Carolina, and to learn more about the SEAUS/Japan Conference coming to Charlotte in October.

Mental Health Awareness Month

My Mental Health: Do I Need Help?

First, determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life.



Do I have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than 2 weeks?

- Feeling a little down
- Feeling down, but still able to do job, schoolwork, or housework
- Some trouble sleeping
- Feeling down, but still able to take care of yourself or take care of others



If so, here are some self-care activities that can help:

- Exercising (e.g., aerobics, yoga)
- Engaging in social contact (virtual or in person)
- Getting adequate sleep on a regular schedule
- Eating healthy
- Talking to a trusted friend or family member
- Practicing meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness

If the symptoms above do not improve or seem to be worsening despite self-care efforts, talk to your health care provider.



Do I have severe symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Unable to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities
- Thoughts of death or self-harm



Seek professional help:

- Psychotherapy (talk therapy)—virtual or in person; individual, group, or family
- Medications
- Brain stimulation therapies

For help finding treatment, visit www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and I'd like to take a moment to highlight resources for those who may need help, data that shows the importance of raising awareness, as well as legislation I have supported that assists those who may struggle with their mental health:

Data

- Approximately one in five adult Americans live with a mental illness.
- Suicide is the 13th leading cause of death in North Carolina, and the 3rd leading cause of death in North Carolina for people between the age of 10 and 34.
- In 2021, 50% of firearm deaths were suicides, and 63% of all suicides were by firearm in North Carolina.
- According to the World Health Organization, in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by 25%—and it has continued to climb.
- Over 60% of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment.
- North Carolinians are over seven times more likely to be forced out-of-network for mental health care than for primary health care. In 2021, almost half of the adults in North Carolina who did not receive needed mental health care reported that they went without care because of the cost.
- The National Institute of Mental Health hosts a [wealth of statistical information](#) on the prevalence and treatment of mental illnesses among the U.S. population.

Legislation I've Supported

2023-2024

- [SB67](#), Firearm Safe Storage Awareness Initiative. (2023)
- [SB210](#), Gun Violence Prevention Act.
- [SB215](#), Allow ERPOs to Prevent Suicides & Save Lives.
- [SB399](#), Mental Health Protection Act.
- [SB450](#), Seized Weapons Security Act.
- [SB496](#), Increase Safe Use of Firearms. (2023)
- [SB567](#), School Mental Health Support Act. (2023)
- [SB826](#), School Mental Health Support Act. (2024)
- [SB837](#), Mental Health Support for Military Veterans.
- [SB849](#), Increase Safe Use of Firearms. (2024)
- [SB893](#), Guarding Freedoms & Public Safety Act.

2021-2022

- [SB392](#), Mental Health Protection Act.
- [SB485](#), Fund Drug Treatment/Mental Health Courts.
- [SB665](#), Prevent Unlicensed Mental Health Facilities.
- [SB807](#), Student Mental Health Support Act.
- [SB844](#), Funding for Adolescent Mental Health Facility.

2019-2020

- [SB426](#), Mental Health Protection Act.
- [SB565](#), Extreme Risk Protection Orders.
- [SB844](#), Student Mental Health Well-Being/COVID-19.

Resources

- If you are suicidal or in emotional distress, please use the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**. You can call, text, or chat [online](#). Just call or text 988.
- If you are a veteran, you may use the Veterans Crisis Line. **Call 988, then press "1."** You can also text **838255** or chat [online](#).
- The [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) provides immediate crisis counseling for people experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. The 24-hour, confidential helpline offers interpretation services in more than 100 languages. Call or text **1-800-985-5990**.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [helpline and online locator for mental health services](#) is a confidential, anonymous resource that can help you find a treatment facility for mental and substance use disorders.
- [North Carolina Employee Assistance Program](#) (NC EAP) is a state-sponsored benefits program that offers confidential and free support and resources for permanent state employees and members of their household to address personal or work-related challenges and concerns.

Learn more [here](#).

Changes to Mecklenburg County Transportation Services

Beginning July 1

The Mecklenburg Transportation System is updating the types of trips offered for senior citizens and disabled residents.

THE FARE PER RIDE WILL BE \$1.50

Changes (trips not available)

- Government/non-profit organizations
- Hair salons and barber shops
- Financial institutions
- Faith-based organizations
- Fitness centers

No Change (trips still available)

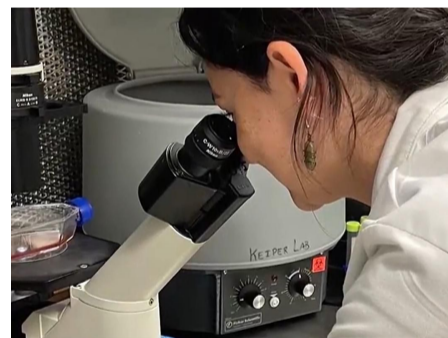
- Medicaid-mandated trips/non-Medicaid medical
- Dialysis or chemotherapy
- Adult day health care
- Nutritional sites, grocery, food banks, and farmers markets
- Medicaid transportation-eligible recipients ride free
- Paid employment and post-secondary education
- Bus passes continue
- Elderly General Purpose: \$10 per month

On July 1, the [Mecklenburg Transportation System \(MTS\)](#) will make changes to the types of trips offered for senior citizens and disabled residents. Residents are invited to attend a series of upcoming information sessions to learn more about the modifications, along with available resources and services, from county staff. Below is a listing of upcoming sessions that residents can attend:

- **Tuesday, June 4, 2:00 - 4:00 PM**
 - Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Rd, Charlotte, NC 28210)
- **Tuesday, June 4, 6:00 - 7:30 PM (SD41)**
 - Allegra Westbrooks Regional Library (2412 Beaties Ford Rd, Charlotte, NC 28216)
- **Wednesday, June 5, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM**
 - Belle Johnson Community Center (1000 Johnston Dr, Pineville, NC 28134)
- **Thursday, June 6, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (SD41)**
 - Waymer Recreation Center (14008 Holbrooks Rd., Huntersville, NC 28078)
- **Tuesday, June 11, 6:00 - 7:00 PM**
 - Independence Regional Library (6000 Conference Dr, Charlotte, NC 28212)
- **Friday, June 14, 2:00 - 4:00 PM (SD41)**
 - West Boulevard (2157 West Blvd, Charlotte, NC 28208)

For additional information, please call MTS Customer Relations at **704-336-3040** or visit the Mecklenburg Transportation System [website](#).

Update On NCInnovation Funding



Last year's state budget included support for a public-private partnership known as NCInnovation, which was granted over \$525 million in state and private funding.

As of this month, NCInnovation has approved its first round of grants designed to boost economic development. Researchers at North Carolina public universities across the state will receive approximately \$5 million each to fund a number of academic research projects, including:

- Appalachian State University, for development of a tool used to decrease honeybee die-off and increase hive production
- East Carolina University, for the development of a new type of cancer immunotherapy for melanoma patients
- **UNC Charlotte**, for a highly effective drinking water purification process
- **UNC Charlotte**, for advancements in power grid efficiency and technology
- UNC Greensboro, for the development of a cost-effective lithium refining process
- UNC Wilmington, for the development of a universal and longer-lasting flu vaccine
- Western Carolina University, for creation of a device that increases the efficiency of mosquito-borne infectious disease identification and risk assessment

While this enormous publicly-funded investment has been controversial, I am interested in the projects that may result from it and the progress it may facilitate. Learn more [here](#).

Updates on the Red Line



The City of Charlotte and Norfolk Southern have reached a tentative agreement allowing the city to use Norfolk Southern's railroad tracks to facilitate the Red Line Project. This would connect Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, Mooresville, and uptown Charlotte via commuter rail.

While this bodes well for the project's progress, the North Carolina General Assembly must give legislative approval for the residents of Charlotte to approve a revenue source to fund the project, i.e. a one-cent sales tax increase for transportation projects. There is controversy about whether the NCGA will approve that request and, if so, how the funds will be allocated. Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

Financial Update on the State's General Fund

Beginning Cash, Friday, May 17	12,500,937,833.66
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	1,415,725,556.26
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	858,784,711.46
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	632,001,174.02
State Aid	97,384,437.20
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	175,174,313.21
Tax Refunds/Distributions	72,116,504.32
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	270,232,595.10
Ending Cash, Friday, May 24	13,528,539,077.53
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	912,902,258.79
Other Reserves	0.00
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	18,331,218.52
Carry Forward Reserve	242,886,016.20
Clean Water Drinking Water Reserve	0.00
Coronavirus Capital Projects Reserve	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Reserve	0.00
Earthquake Disaster Recovery Reserve	0.00
Economic Development Project Reserve	736,800,000.00
Federal Infrastructure Match Reserve	121,758,723.00
Housing Reserve	0.00
Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve	56,668,983.05
Information Technology Reserve	410,307,521.00
Local Fiscal Recovery Reserve-ARPA	0.00
Local Govt Coronavirus Relief Reserve	0.00
Local Project Reserve	0.00
Medicaid Contingency Reserve	726,512,736.00
Medicaid Transformation Reserve	60,642,170.00
NC GREAT Reserve	0.00
NC Innovation Reserve	0.00
Opioid Abatement Reserve	35,030,248.56
Public School Contingency Reserve	0.00
Public School Need Based Capital Reserve	0.00
Reg Economic Dev Reserve	4,650,000.00
Repairs and Renovations Reserve	0.00
Retiree Supplement Reserve	0.00
SCIF General Fund Reserve	0.00
Savings Reserve	4,750,001,113.98
Stabilization and Inflation Reserve	1,000,000,000.00
State Emergency Response/Disaster Reserve	669,444,758.49
Transportation Reserve	0.00
Unfunded Liability Solvency Reserve	0.00
Wilmington Harbor Enhancements Reserve	283,800,000.00
World University Games Reserve	0.00
Unreserved Cash Balance, Friday, May 24	3,498,803,329.94

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, May 24. OSC provides a weekly update on the State's General Fund cash position, which can be found at osc.nc.gov. **The current unreserved cash balance in state coffers is \$3.498 billion.**

The State Controller is North Carolina's chief fiscal officer and serves as an independent resource to ensure the financial integrity of the State.

Links to Helpful Information

Domestic Violence Hotline: If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence or partner abuse, please call [Safe Alliance](#) at **704-332-2513** and they can help you.

Free Property Tax Assistance Services: Do you need help with your property taxes? The [Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy](#) is providing free assistance to help homeowners prepare their NC property tax relief applications. Call **980-256-7952** or visit their website to learn more [here](#).

Mecklenburg's County Bar [website](#) provides a list of pro bono resources for those unable to afford legal counsel.

Mecklenburg's Department of Community Resources provides individuals and families with [immediate access](#) to a diverse range of Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services programs and community partner services in Community Resources Centers throughout the County.

Mecklenburg's Energy Assistance Programs: Do you need help paying your heating or cooling bills? Mecklenburg offers [two different programs](#) to help eligible low-income households with their energy needs.

Property Tax values and histories in Mecklenburg County can be searched on [this site](#) that includes links to Polaris and information about past assessments. You can find more detailed information on real estate values on the [Mecklenburg](#) site.

Suicide Prevention: If you have thoughts of harming yourself, **please call or text 988**, the Suicide Prevention Hotline for help.

Unclaimed Cash! Visit [NCCash.com](#) today to see if you have unclaimed property under the supervision of the NC Treasurer's office. More info [here](#).

Voter Information: You can find your current information on the [NC Voter Lookup page](#).

Contact Our Office

Phone: (919) 715-3050

Email:

Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov

Sarah.E.Reynolds@ncleg.gov

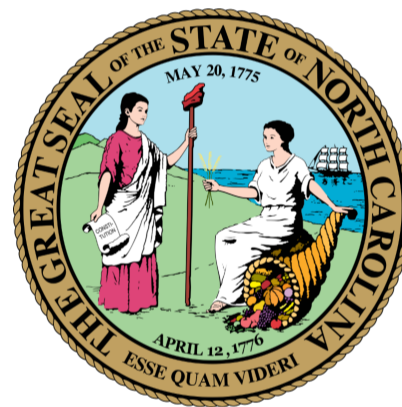
Sara

Mailing Address:

300 N. Salisbury Street,

Rm. 519

Raleigh, NC 27603



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

Senator Natasha Marcus | [Website](#)



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

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