

North Carolina Citizens for Public Health Legislative Priorities 2019

Since the North Carolina Citizens for Public Health has 178 members representing 62 counties and is still growing, we feel we need to consider public health priorities in the broadest sense, realizing that none of us are going to rally and support all of our priorities but hopefully many of us will feel a passion to support some of them when needed. You will see that we have already listed submitted bills for some priorities and as the session continues, we will be adding new ones and updating our website. Hopefully this will allow our membership to better stay on top of what is going on. We will also be sending our membership e-mails with talking points when specific actions are needed.

1. **Support legislation that will close the health insurance coverage gap in North Carolina** and provide access to affordable coverage to the nearly 400,000 individuals living in the coverage gap. The appropriate legislation must address four key principles which are: Accessibility, Affordability, Accountability, and Economic Development.
Monitor NC-HB 5 and NC-SB 3, Close the Medicaid Coverage Gap, to close the gap for families and individuals in North Carolina and **NC-HB 655** NC Health Care for Working Families to provide health coverage to residents of North Carolina under the NC Health Care for Working Families Program and to establish the North Carolina Rural Access to Healthcare Grant. **NCPHA is currently endorsing NC-HB 655.**
[HOUSE BUDGET UPDATE: HB 655 was never heard in committee.]
[SENATE BUDGET UPDATE: No funding included.]
This is not dead yet because in the House the Republican Caucus had enough votes to pass HB 655 before it was referred to committee and the Governor wants this included in the budget.
2. **Support** the local health directors' \$8 million **appropriation request to fund the local communicable and emerging disease program** for communicable disease staff in every health department. **Support NC-HB 579 Local Communicable Disease Prevention Funds**, an act appropriating funds to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, to expand local communicable disease surveillance, detection, control, and prevention infrastructure and activities.
[HOUSE BUDGET UPDATE: Budget included \$4M: \$2M to be distributed to health department by county (\$20,000 for each county served) and \$2M to be distributed to health department based on population served.]
[SENATE BUDGET UPDATE: No funding included.]
3. **Support efforts related to the prevention and reduction of tobacco use:**
 - a. **Support** securing CDC-recommended levels of **recurring funding for evidence-based tobacco use prevention and cessation programs** in North Carolina.
 - **NC-HB 725**, The END Act to restore \$17 million in recurring funds for tobacco use and prevention programs in NC.

[HOUSE BUDGET UPDATE: Prevention Programs: \$910,000 in nonrecurring funds (FY2019-20) and \$680,000 in nonrecurring funds (FY 2010-21). Cessation Programs: Funding remains the same.]

[SENATE BUDGET UPDATE: Prevention Programs: No funding. Cessation Programs: No funding.]

- b. **Support effective Tobacco 21 legislation** in North Carolina. Tobacco 21 is a national campaign aimed at raising the minimum legal age for tobacco and nicotine sales in the United States to 21. This campaign is produced and funded by the Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation, a public health nonprofit organization established in 1996.
4. **Support efforts related to the promotion of exercise and eating healthy foods:**
- a. **Support** a request for \$1 million in **recurring funds to expand the North Carolina Healthy Food Small Retailer Program** that increases the amount of healthy foods (including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins) offered in existing corner stores in low- and moderate-income communities.
[HOUSE BUDGET UPDATE: No funding but Included language to allow the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to use funding appropriated past year to continue the program.]
[SENATE BUDGET UPDATE: No funding and no language change.]
 - b. **Support** a request to **enhance schools' accountability and reporting to provide quality physical education**. This includes updating the State Board of Education Healthy Active Child Policy and enhancing the reporting about physical education in schools within this policy.
[HOUSE AND SENATE BUDGETS UPDATE: No funding was included.]
 - c. **Support** FARMs for School Meals in the budget. This program will benefit children, farmers, and local economics by helping schools purchase more food from local farms. More information can be found at www.FarmsforSchoolMeals.org.
[HOUSE BUDGET UPDATE: No additional funding but feasibility study will be conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on feasibility of including organic food in the NC Farm Program but no additional funding.]
[SENATE BUDGET UPDATE: No funding.]
5. **Support restoring Women's and Children's Health Block Grant funding to local health departments.**
[Not only did this not happen but more funds were taken away from it by both the House and the Senate (see Priority 12e).]
6. **Support the SAVE (Safe, Accessible, Value Directed, Excellent) Act [NC HB 185 and NC SB 143]** which would remove barriers that prevent Advanced Practice Nurses from practicing to the full extent of their training.
[Did not meet crossover deadline. Further action unlikely, though not impossible.]

7. **Support efforts to prevent injury and death by firearms throughout the lifespan**, such as are stated in the NCALHD Policy: <http://www.ncalhd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NCALHD-Firearm-Approved-Statement.pdf>.
 - a. **Support The Gun Violence Protection Act [NC HB 86]** that would, among other provisions: require gun owners to carry liability insurance, allow cities and counties to establish their own rules on where guns are permitted, require gun owners to report a lost or stolen weapon to law enforcement within 48 hours, allow law enforcement to destroy firearms they seize, and make it a misdemeanor to fail to store a firearm in a secure, locked container when not in use.
 - b. **Oppose Omnibus Gun Changes [NC HB 61]** that would do away with the law requiring a permit to carry a concealed handgun. It would also raise the age for carrying a concealed handgun from 18 to 21. This is an amended version of a bill introduced last year.
 - c. **Oppose School Self Defense Act [NC HB 216]** that would make it legal for teachers and staff members to carry concealed handguns on school grounds “to respond to acts of violence/imminent threats of violence.”
 - d. **Oppose School Security Act of 2019 [NC SB 192]** that would incentivize teachers to carry concealed weapons, provide training and pay raises to teachers who undergo law enforcement training, and make them sworn law enforcement officers.
8. **Support efforts that promote increasing immunization rates and identify and overcome barriers to immunizations**, such as are stated in the NCALHD Policy: <http://www.ncalhd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ImmunizationPosition.pdf>.
9. **Support efforts that reduce Opioid misuse**, such as are stated in the NCALHD Policy: <http://www.ncalhd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NCALHD-Opioid-Abuse-Work-Group-Position-Statement-FINAL.DOCX.pdf>.
10. **Support NC HB 271 and NC SB 184 to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment** that were introduced at the NC General Assembly on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 by primary sponsors Rep. Carla Cunningham and Sen. Floyd McKissick, Jr.
11. **Support The Hands Free NC Act [NC HB 144]**. The bill would make it unlawful to use a wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle on a public street, highway, or public vehicular area in any of the following ways: wireless communication device in a person’s hands, while physically holding or supporting a wireless communication device with a person’s body, while watching a video or movie or communicating by video on a wireless communication device, and while texting on a wireless communication device.
[\[A watered-down version of HB 144 passed in the House and now the Senate is trying to restore the original “hand-free” intent.\]](#)

12. Prepare to respond to proposed legislation which would affect public health funding or evidence-based public health policy (e.g., raw milk, privatization of on-site wastewater permitting program, limiting or banning abortion rights, etc.).
 - a. **Oppose Small Dairy Sustainability Act [NC HB 103]** that would allow the sale of raw milk for human consumption.
 - b. **Oppose Disapprove Certain On-Site Wastewater Rules [NC HB 156]** to disapprove a rule adopted by the North Carolina Commission for Public Health reducing suitable soil depth for all wastewater disposal technologies.
 - c. **Oppose Require Safety Helmets/Under 21 [NC HB 267]** that would revise the motor vehicle laws to provide certain exceptions to the requirement that all operators and passengers on motorcycles and mopeds wear a safety helmet and to remove the assessment of court costs from the penalties applied found guilty of a helmet infraction.
 - d. **Oppose Disapprove Certain Onsite Wastewater Rules [NC HB 268]** to disapprove certain wastewater treatment and dispersal rules adopted by the North Carolina Commission for Public Health. This is more extensive than HB 156.
 - e. **Support Appropriate Additional School Nurses [NC-HB 524]** an act to appropriate additional funds for school nurses to improve the school nurse to student ratios especially in areas when these ratios are currently lower than the state average or have a student population that is growing at a rate higher than the state average. [\[HOUSE AND SENATE BUDGETS UPDATE: Each included \\$400,000 in recurring funds but this was not new money, it was taken from the MCH Block Grant funds.\]](#)
 - f. **Support Essential Services for Homeless Youth [NC-HB 613]** that would allow unaccompanied homeless minors to consent to medical treatment. It would also give the Social Services Commission the authority to adopt rules facilitating access to child care for homeless children.

13. At the national level, **Support Expanded and Improved Medicare for All [US HB 676]**. This bill would establish a single payer health care system by expanding and greatly improving Medicare. It would cover everyone for all necessary medical and dental care including mental health, home health, physical therapy, rehabilitation (including for substance abuse), vision care, chiropractic, eyeglasses, hearing aids, other medical devices and long-term care. It will also end premiums, deductibles and co-payments.