



2023 LONG SESSION LEGISLATIVE REPORT

250BILLS
MONITORED**2,817**ADVOCACY EMAILS
SENT TO LEGISLATORS**75**KEY CONTACT
MEMBERS**50**MEETINGS WITH
LEGISLATORS**2,256**HEALTHCARE LEADERS
ENGAGED IN OUR
ADVOCACY EFFORTS**10**WHITE COAT
DAYS HELD

INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina General Assembly convened on January 11th for the long session of the 2023-2024 biennium. Senator Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) was re-elected to serve his seventh term as Senate President Pro Tempore, and Representative Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) was re-elected for a fifth term as Speaker of the House, making him the longest serving Speaker in North Carolina History.

Of the 170 legislators sworn in, two are physicians and both serve in the House: Dr. Kristin Baker (R-Cabarrus) and Dr. Tim Reeder (R-Pitt). Representative Baker, a child psychiatrist, began her second term and serves as a House Health Committee Chair. Representative Reeder, former NCMS president and emergency room physician, is serving his first term. Both are invaluable partners at the legislature and allies in advocacy.

More than 1,600 bills were filed this session, and the North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS) tracked hundreds of them. The NCMS worked intensely on many of these bills, which addressed our priority issues, including prior authorization relief, workplace safety, protecting patient safety. Our greatest success was Medicaid expansion, which is a historic victory for expanded access to health care.

Below are some highlights from this session, grouped by our legislative priorities.

ATTAIN AN ACCESSIBLE, EQUITABLE, AND PATIENT-CENTERED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM



HB 576

Healthcare
Practitioner
Transparency Act



SB 654

Pharmacists/Vaccine
Admin/Test and Treat



HB 246

Revise Pharmacy
Benefits Manager
Provisions



HB 346/SB 296

Reorganization &
Economic
Development Act



HB 218/SB 175

The SAVE Act



HB 76

Access to Healthcare
Options (Medicaid
Expansion)



HB 557

The North Carolina
Healing Arts
Commission



HB 75

PA Team-Based
Practice



HB 739

Update
Reqs./Advance Health
Care Directives

HB 76- ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE OPTIONS (MEDICAID EXPANSION)

This legislation expanded Medicaid coverage to over 600,000 North Carolinians and made the state eligible for a one-time \$1.8 billion bonus from the federal government through the Healthcare Access and Stabilization Program (HASP). HASP will primarily help stabilize rural hospitals that have experienced financial hardship. The bill also expanded postpartum coverage for mothers and created a statewide workforce development program. NCMS has long supported the effort to achieve Medicaid Expansion. We applaud the House, Senate, and Governor Cooper for passing and signing this bill.

HB 218/SB 175- THE SAVE ACT

This legislation would allow advance practice nurses to practice without physician involvement. NCMS opposes this bill and continues to promote patient safety in its efforts to educate policy makers on the impact this legislation would have on quality, access, and cost of care. While, the bill was not heard in either chamber during the long session, concerns were raised that it would be included in the Senate budget proposal. The SAVE Act had less sponsors this year than during previous years, but interest in this proposal continues.

HB 346/SB 296- REORGANIZATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT

This legislation establishes rules for hospital service corporation reorganization by creating a nonprofit holding corporation. NCMS met with BCBSNC leadership, the bill's sponsors, NC Department of Insurance representatives, and other stakeholders to recommend improvements to this bill by adding guardrails on investments and to promote continued transparency. NCMS obtained a number of concessions, but the bill's enacted language does not include all recommended changes. The bill has become law.

HB 654- PHARMACISTS/VACCINE ADMIN./TEST AND TREAT

This legislation would expand the scope of pharmacists to include testing and treatment for certain illnesses, in addition to making pharmacists eligible for reimbursement for services or procedures performed. NCMS opposed this bill as it would allow pharmacists to treat certain illnesses after testing, which constitutes diagnosis. This bill failed to meet the crossover deadline this year.

BUILD A SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE



HB 809

Hospital Violence
Protection Act



SB 324

Interstate Medical
Licensure Compact



HB 125

International Physician
Licensure



HB 259

2023-2023 State
Budget



SB 310

Solving the Preceptor
Crisis



HB 125

Physician Military License
Relocation

HB 809- HOSPITAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACT

Rep./Dr. Tim Reeder authored this legislation to minimize the likelihood of violence against providers by ensuring health care facilities develop safety protocols to address risks identified by the medical care team, security personnel, and local law enforcement. HB 809 was passed by the House but was not heard in the Senate. The measure advanced, however, after the NCMS successfully advocated for its inclusion in HB 125.

SB 324- INTERSTATE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMPACT

This legislation would allow North Carolina to join the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (IMLC). 42 states have enacted IMLC legislation. The IMLC allows physicians to easily be licensed for the practice of medicine in multiple states if certain requirements are met. NCMS supports this bill, as it would allow physicians to easily transfer their license from state to state. The bill did not pass either chamber in the long session.

PROTECT THE CLINICIAN-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP



HB 649

Ensure Timely/Clinically
Sound Utilization
Review



SB 49

Parent's Bill of
Rights

SB 20

Care for Women,
Children, and
Families Act

HB 808

Youth Health
Protection Act/
Gender/
Transition Minors

HB 649- ENSURE TIMELY/CLINICALLY SOUND UTILIZATION REVIEW

This legislation has multiple provisions to ensure patients will receive timely medical care and requires prior authorization decisions be made by qualified health care providers. NCMS was the primary author of this prior authorization reform bill and worked diligently toward its passage in the House this session. The bill has not been heard in the Senate, but NCMS is advocating for its consideration next year.

SB 20- CARE FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES ACT

Senate Bill 20 governs certain aspects of reproductive health, including abortion. This legislation does not allow abortions after 12 weeks gestation, with some exceptions for rape, incest, fetal anomaly, and health of the mother, among other provisions. Despite Governor Cooper's objections, SB 20 became law when both chambers voted to override his veto.

HB 808- YOUTH HEALTH PROTECTION ACT/GENDER/ TRANSITION MINORS

This legislation prohibits hormone replacement therapy and other surgical procedures for minors in most cases. Despite attempts by members to repeal the authority of minors to consent to medical care in very limited circumstances, the NCMS successfully advocated for maintaining the current law which allows minors to consent to medical care on matters related to pregnancy, emotional disturbance, substance abuse, and venereal diseases. However, the bill became law after the legislature overrode a veto by the Governor.

2023-2024 NORTH CAROLINA BUDGET

OVERVIEW

After much debate between the two chambers, a budget agreement was reached on September 22nd. Without Governor Cooper's signature, House Bill 259 became law on October 3rd and provided the final authorization needed to implement Medicaid Expansion. December 1st, Medicaid will be newly available to over 600,000 North Carolinians.

HEALTH IN THE BUDGET

- **\$25 million** to expand a loan repayment program for providers working in rural areas. This will both encourage and better enable health care providers to work in rural communities across the state.
- **\$8 million** loan repayment program for students in Primary Care and Psychiatry to increase those practicing in these disciplines throughout the state in eligible counties.
- **\$12.5 million** in loans for eligible rural hospitals. Since 2010, when Medicaid Expansion first became an option, seven hospitals in rural North Carolina have closed. This program will help provide the necessary resources to begin rebuilding this critical infrastructure.
- **\$5 million** for telehealth infrastructure.
- **\$11.25 million** to train medical residents in rural areas.
 - NC AHEC shall contract with up to five rural community-based medical teaching practices for at least one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) per teaching practice per year to establish and maintain up to five outpatient, clinical, team-based healthcare teaching sites across the rural areas of the State.
 - \$500,000 over two years to study access to community preceptors, in addition to the supply and demand issues for preceptorships.

- The NC Care program, a collaboration between UNC Health and ECU Health, will be established over the next two fiscal years. \$420 million is set aside to create three rural health clinics, including \$150 million for rural hospital investment, \$50 million for a new children's behavioral health hospital, and \$10 million for start-up costs.
- **\$10 million** for 350 new slots in the Innovations Waiver system, which provides community-based care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Increases fees paid to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for autopsies, creation of a new autopsy center in southern Piedmont, an additional **\$4 million** in funding for the Medical Examiner over the biennium and money for a toxicologist.
- **\$7 million** over the biennium for digitizing birth certificates and other vital records.
- **\$18.75 million** for youth tobacco and vaping cessation programs.