

JAMEZETTA BEDFORD, CHAIR
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SALLY GREENE
JEAN HAMILTON
PHYLLIS PORTIE-ASCOTT
ANNA RICHARDS

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
POST OFFICE BOX 8181
300 W TRYON STREET
HILLSBOROUGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27278



February 17, 2023

Senator Graig Meyer
Representative Renee Price
Representative Allen Buansi

Dear Senator Meyer and Representatives Price and Buansi:

This letter is to express the Board of Commissioners' appreciation for your support and assistance with legislative initiatives of importance to Orange County. We appreciate the effort and time you invest on our behalf and hope the 2023 legislative session affords opportunities for further collaboration.

Please find attached an Orange County 2023 Priority Legislative Issues document outlining Orange County's most important legislative interests for 2023.

We appreciate the opportunity to share this information with you and look forward to your support. We also look forward to our discussion with you on these and potentially other legislative issues at our Legislative Breakfast on February 27, 2023 at 8:30 am at the Solid Waste Operations Center on Eubanks Road in Chapel Hill. Please contact me or other Board members directly for any additional information, or if there is anything we can do to assist with your efforts in Raleigh. We can also be reached through Laura Jensen, the Clerk to the Board, at her office in Hillsborough at (919) 245-2130.

Sincerely,

Jamezetta Bedford, Chair
Orange County Board of Commissioners

Enclosures

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Orange County, North Carolina – You Count!
(919) 245-2130 • FAX (919) 644-0246

ORANGE COUNTY 2023 PRIORITY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Mental Health & Behavioral Health Services – Seek legislation to develop and fund mental health and behavioral health facilities and services at the state and local level that:

- ensure adequate State-funded mental health, developmental disability and substance use disorder services and facilities are available, accessible and affordable to all residents;
- include dedicated resources for community para-medicine projects and enhanced mobile crisis response;
- support Medicaid reimbursement to EMS for behavioral health transport to crisis centers;
- reduce the number of people with mental health issues in county detention centers;
- ensure that state resources fund service provision costs, inclusive of crisis intervention and treatment;
- provide assistance to NC residents, especially youth, who are dealing with the impacts of COVID;
- Increase innovation waiver slots more aggressively to meet the Olmstead Act requirements; and
- Increase compensation for nurses and direct support staff funded by innovation waivers and other Medicaid sources.

Medicaid Expansion – Support legislation increasing access to the Medicaid program to make health insurance available to North Carolina residents at 138% of the poverty level; broaden the opportunity for coverage for more than 500,000 North Carolinians to address chronic conditions and to prevent illness and disease progression; to provide additional support for rural hospitals; and to protect families from medical debt and bankruptcy;

Racial Equity in Criminal Justice – Support continued consideration and implementation, where practicable, of the recommendations of the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC), including:

- legislation to legalize the possession and use of marijuana and permit licensed businesses to engage in retail sales to adults, as this decriminalization will in turn broaden the agricultural economy and jobs as well as enhance revenue for governments with taxes, licenses, and other associated revenues that can be utilized to address opioid and other drug-related problems and other needs;
- policing reforms to address use of force, community oversight and law enforcement training on crisis intervention;
- Funding at the county level to expand access to diversion and restorative justice programs;
- the reduction of fines, fees and costs in criminal court, noting that such fines, fees and costs disproportionately impact people of color and people of low income; and
- the decompression of Juvenile Justice salaries.

Concealed Weapons in Parks and Red Flag Law – Support legislation authorizing counties to regulate the carrying of concealed weapons on county-owned playgrounds and in county-owned parklands, and allowing courts to prevent access to firearms for individuals who show signs of being a danger to themselves or to others. Mental illness, escalating threats, substance abuse and domestic violence are among the circumstances in which a judge should have the authority to order weapon restrictions or surrender;

Full Funding of the Leandro Remedial Action Plan – Support equity and racial justice by fully funding the Leandro Remedial Action Plan, which details additional comprehensive, targeted education funding over the next eight years, predominantly to low-wealth and minority communities, in order for the State to come into compliance with its constitutional obligation to provide every student a sound basic education;

Priority School Issues – Support legislation to address the following issues related to schools:

- a) Provide local school systems with calendar flexibility;
- b) Provide full funding for State allotments including Average Daily Membership (ADM) growth and infrastructure/capital, and support legislation to provide for an overall increase in funding based on ADM outside of the current formula system;
- c) a periodic accounting process for State per pupil funds so that funds and pro-rated funds follow students to their respective schools, as opposed to the current process that only considers State funding allocations based on students' attendance location on a single day during the school year;
- d) Increase salary compensation for teachers and staff at all years of service;
- e) Impose class size reductions commensurate with State funding for staffing; and
- f) Maintain full funding for Driver Education;

School Capital Funding – Support legislation to provide needed State capital funding to support school infrastructure, renovations, and new construction, and support a State bond referendum to address school capital needs; and

Non-Partisan Redistricting Process for Elections – Support legislation to establish a process for an independent, non-partisan redistricting process after each United States Census for the election of representatives from North Carolina to the United States House of Representatives, the North Carolina House, and the North Carolina Senate.