

## 2022-2023 NCACC Commissioner Legislative Goals – Rutherford County

### Public Education:

- PUBLIC EDUCATION – Restore the full funding for school construction needs either on an equitable basis and/or with a preference to the most impoverished counties. The addition of one of the other proposed funding formulas for school capital, would certainly accelerate much needed replacement and renovation of school buildings in our low wealth, Tier I county.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION - Remove \$100M cap from Lottery Proceeds that are allocated to school capital. When the Lottery started in 2006, 40% of proceeds were to be allocated to the Public School Building Capital Fund. With the cap in place this contribution percentage has continued to decrease. With funding ending in 2013 with the elimination of corporate income tax allocations, many counties were at a disadvantage as those funds were already committed to debt service. Fortunately, there have been some new programs such as the Needs-Based Public School Fund grant, but this does not help all counties equitably as the funds within the \$100M cap would do (allocated based upon ADM of LEAs).
- PUBLIC EDUCATION – The legislative budget appropriations over the last couple of budget cycles have provided some relief to community colleges, but the funding continues to be inadequate to address the post-recession capital facility needs of the community colleges. With the ConnectNC bonds, over \$600 million went to the universities, which are in sixteen counties (predominantly urban areas), and \$350 million went to the 58 community colleges and satellite campuses (predominantly rural areas). The glaring difference being that rural counties are carrying the primary financial burden and debt service for the significant repair and renovation costs as the community colleges age. An infusion of money into rural counties to help with construction and repair and renovation of community college buildings would relieve the tax burden on the more challenged counties and help to rebuild the economy in those counties. It goes without saying that it would also enhance the educational environment of the colleges, which are very important to North Carolina and its future. One of our goals should be to seek legislation to address statewide community college capital challenges--including but not limited to maintenance, renovation, construction and debt--through a dedicated, stable funding stream that is consistent from county to county and sufficient to meet the facility needs of the community colleges.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION – Support legislation to fully fund state-mandated education programs from state revenue sources including Exceptional Children's Services. Legislators have been hesitant to make funding formula changes due to discussion regarding changes in the method of funding public education in NC. Although full funding for all programs is important, the actual decreases in the per pupil funding levels for Exceptional Children (EC) is most impactful as the costs and requirements for these students continue to increase and flat or decreased funding is not sustainable due to the annual Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements imposed by the federal government for provision of EC services as detailed in their IEP plans. Well over half, 61%, of the State's school districts are subjected to the arbitrary EC funding cap (13%). Legislators could help relieve this deficit, simply by increasing the annual per pupil funding amount, if they are not yet prepared to lift the cap or make other major formula changes.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION – Support legislation providing for funding to help school systems implement school security measures via technology and staff resources, primarily School Resource Officers (SROs). Current funding for the school systems receive to cover a portion of

the cost of the SROs is not keeping pace with the annual salary and benefit adjustments, which places additional burden on the County taxpayers to cover these additional expenditures.

- PUBLIC EDUCATION – Support full funding for public education as detailed in the recent WestEd recommendations to resolve the Leandro court case. Support of the Leandro funding is still a valid and important goal and does include a provision for an increase in Exceptional Children program funding.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION - Increase the recurring student FTE value for community colleges to that equivalent to UNC courses that earn the same academic credit for students. This increase will bring North Carolina community colleges to the average percentage state funding per FTE student of our four surrounding states (Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia). Students in NC community colleges are currently funded at only 54% of UNC system freshman and sophomore students in comparable classes, despite smaller average class sizes and faculty credentials that meet or exceed those in the UNC System. An increase in the value of FTE would allow community colleges to enhance and expand their programs, delivery systems, and student support systems to better address the needs of rural NC. It would also allow community colleges to build much needed capacity to grow and adapt, innovating to improve student success and completion.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION - Encourage lawmakers to build on the 5% employee salary increases from the 2021-23 budget. An additional recurring 8%, over the next three years brings our faculty salaries to the projected average (\$56,693) of the four states neighboring North Carolina (Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia). These recurring increases would be applied to all employee salaries. Providing the necessary education and services requires talent and human capital, which are proving to be the scarcest resources for our colleges as well, especially so in the rural colleges. Colleges are struggling to attract and retain the talent needed to satisfy this demand from students and employers. We are competing for talent against not only other educational entities, but also those same businesses we strive to serve. This competition crosses our borders, as we are often losing talent to neighboring states.

#### **Tax & Finance:**

- TAX & FINANCE – Restore funding to the State Aid to Public Libraries Fund to the pre-2011 level of \$15.7 million.
- TAX & FINANCE – Expand incentives and funding for local economic development projects including Site Development Revolving Assistance fund.
- TAX & FINANCE – Reduce pressure on property taxpayers by expanding locally-controlled options for revenue generation. Property taxes remain the primary revenue stream over which local governments exercise control. Local governments have limited ability or authority to raise significant revenue in other ways. A lack of diverse, local tax options can affect economic growth, as well as cause large swings in revenue based on economic changes. Local governments should have more local authority for calling for referendums for local options sales taxes, prepared food, and beverage taxes, or even real estate transfer tax.
- TAX & FINANCE - Increase public safety grant funding and expand allowable uses. More effective and equitable policing can be achieved by additional funding for community policing programs, as well as putting more dollars toward alternative programs that seek to address mental health calls and other issues through non-uniformed personnel. The funding could come as public safety without the tag of reducing police forces and increasing programs. Funding for communication equipment and staffing is not as readily available as it has in prior years.
- TAX & FINANCE - Ensure state funding for any new, state-mandated benefits for local government employees.

- TAX & FINANCE – Water and sewer system infrastructures across NC are aging/antiquated and are becoming increasingly insufficient to handle the growing demands placed on these systems, which are locally controlled by local government bodies. Provide funding to keep aging water and sewer systems financially solvent today and viable for the future. Also, create a permanent and adequate funding stream for local infrastructure needs and extend repayment terms of State Revolving Fund Loans to 40 years, or the life of the asset – as the USDA loan programs often do.
- TAX & FINANCE – Provide local governments with the legal tools and funding to revitalize vacant and abandoned properties.
- TAX & FINANCE – Municipal governments are not able to keep pace with the demands placed on them to repair and resurface their secondary streets. Increased Powell Bill and other funding sources are needed.

### **Justice and Public Safety:**

- JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY – In 2009 during the second year of the great recession, budget writers recommended to the legislature, which they approved, that the State shift to the counties the responsibility of covering the cost of housing and providing utilities for their State justice employees who are employed to manage and operate State Probation & Parole, Juvenile Services and Public Defenders Offices in county governments owned or leased spaces. We do not provide housing for other State departments/employees assigned to or county (e.g., NCDOT, Highway Patrol, DMV, ESC, etc.) and the State previously leased spaces from the County for their employees. Counties are currently carrying the burden of housing Probation & Parole, Juvenile Services and the Public Defenders Offices, which creates an additional burden when providing office space and parking is critical to county operations. Now that the State has experienced multiple budget cycles of revenues above projections, it is time to shift this burden back to the state and off the backs of the counties.
- JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY – Support legislation to categorize public safety telecommunicators as First Responders in the protective service occupation under the Standard Occupational Classification System instead of in the Administrative Support classification. Public safety telecommunicators play a critical role in emergency response and the work performed by telecommunicators goes far beyond merely relaying information between the public and first responders. Information obtained and actions taken by telecommunicators form the foundation of an effective response. As an example, when a hostage taker or suicidal person calls 911, the first contact is with the telecommunicator whose negotiation skills can prevent the situations from worsening. Telecommunicators coach callers through first aid, give advice to prevent further harm, and they often communicate with people in great distress, harm, fear, or injury while employing their experience and training to recognize a critical piece of information. The work of public safety telecommunicators comes with an extreme emotional and physical impact that is compounded by long hours and the around-the-clock nature of the job.
- JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY – Amend legislation to permit border counties to enter into mutual aid agreements with border counties in other states. NCGS 160A-288 is the current legislation regarding this topic.
- JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY – Support legislation that provides Counties with greater flexibility in our use of 911 funds and protects our current funding streams.

## **General Government:**

- GENERAL GOVERNMENT – Allow Counties the discretion to create public-private partnerships to manage TDA functions. This would afford counties the opportunity to encourage public-private partnerships when in the best interest of the citizens.
- GENERAL GOVERNMENT – Advocate to the legislators to change the current State Transportation Improvement Program NCDOT SPOT 4.0 scoring methodology that we feel currently excludes rural communities (RPOs) from competing for state funding for our local interstate, highway and secondary road projects to ensure our economic prosperity. Based on the current scoring methodology, rural communities will NEVER have the population base, excessive congestion or traffic counts to compete with the MPOs. A continuation of this scoring methodology will negatively and exponentially impact our ability to create some level of our own economic sustainability, which will increase outward migration of our population to the larger, better served urban centers. NCACC's advocacy for Legislative consideration is requested to stave off this widening urban vs. rural gap.
- GENERAL GOVERNMENT – Advocate for legislation to reinstate funding levels for electronics, tires and white goods recycling, which current legislation requires counties to separate these items and make available for recycling purposes. This is especially critical as the recycling market as severely eroded in NC and counties are especially hit with this financial burden.
- GENERAL GOVERNMENT – Allow local governments greater flexibility for publishing Public Notices including delinquent taxes via electronic formats (e.g., website, social media platforms, etc.). Printed news mediums continue to see huge declines in their subscriptions and are attempting to make up for lost revenue by charging local governments outrageous fees for publishing required public notices.

## **Health & Human Services:**

- HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES – Revisit advocating for the reintroduction of legislation regarding adequately funding Public Health services.
- HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES – Advocate for legislation for Medicaid reimbursement to EMS for mental health and substance abuse transport to crisis centers. This would assist county efforts to lower the number of patients at the ER and help open the door to allow us to be reimbursed for transports to other places than just hospitals.
- HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES – Revisit 2017-2018 Legislative Goal HHS-3 and expand this to include Guardianship. The APS and Guardianship funds that we receive from the state are used very quickly and then we have to revert to county funds. During FY2017-2018, Rutherford County DSS expended approximately \$70,000 in county funds. For APS statewide, funding was 3% state, 79% county and 18% federal.
- HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES – Support legislation that will increase the recurring state funding for Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) programming. HCCBG funds non-Medicaid funded services like In-Home Aide, Meals on Wheels, Adult Daycare, etc. These are services that help maintain adults in their own homes, which is much less expensive than placement in a facility.
- HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES – Support a revision to the provision in G.S. 108A-74 requiring counties to enter in annual written agreements for all social services program other than medical assistance and further support that this legislation be retracted. County DSS agencies exist as an arm/extension of the State government and are mandated to provide DSS services. Requiring counties to sign a written agreement for services we are mandated to provide is unreasonable.

**Agriculture Goals:**

- AGRICULTURE – Support state funding and staffing for equine-agricultural research, NC State Extension Services and other equine-agriculture related efforts to support one of the potentially largest agriculture based economic drivers impacting counties within a 75-mile radius of the Tryon International Equestrian Center located in Polk County.
- AGRICULTURE – Support legislation allowing counties to partner with neighboring counties to establish multijurisdictional regional Agricultural Business Districts that allow for favorable taxation and incentives to attract agricultural businesses to the region.

**Environment Goals:**

- ENVIRONMENT – Support state funding to research and combat invasive plant species that are overrunning many counties such as kudzu, ground ivy, Japanese Wisteria, Princess Tree, etc.
- ENVIRONMENT – Support legislation to increase funding for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund for water and sewer infrastructure projects.