

Cooper Budget Pushes State Spending To \$25 Billion

By Administrator
Tuesday, 12 March 2019 15:28 -

Governor Cooper Proposes Budget to Invest in Education, Good Jobs, and Healthier Communities
Cooper Offers Plan to Invest in a Determined North Carolina
Governor's Full Budget Available [HERE](#)

<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=38109465&msgid=448593&act=E9NM&c=1346310&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.osbm.nc.gov%2FBudgetBook_2019-21>

RALEIGH: Governor Roy Cooper today released his recommended budget for 2019-2021, Investments for a Determined North Carolina. The plan put forward by the governor invests in better teacher pay and stronger public schools, improves the health of North Carolina's people, and provides economic opportunity for all parts of our state.

"North Carolinians are determined to succeed and this budget invests in that determination through better schools and better opportunities for people to find good jobs and keep their families healthy and safe," Gov. Cooper said.

Gov. Cooper's budget allocates \$25.2 billion and makes crucial investments in education and job training, health care, economic development, and public safety. The budget achieves these goals without raising taxes on North Carolina people or establishing new fees.

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“These are common-sense priorities shared across our state and across party lines, and I look forward to working with legislative leaders to make these crucial investments for North Carolina’s future,” Gov. Cooper said.

Better Pay for Teachers, Stronger Public Schools

Gov. Cooper’s budget prioritizes public education by investing in better pay and respect for teachers and principals. The governor’s budget puts North Carolina on a path to become best in the Southeast in teacher pay in four years. Teachers would see an average pay raise of 9.1% over two years. Principals would be paid based on both experience and the size of the student body they lead.

Gov. Cooper also proposes restoring extra pay for teachers and instructional support who hold a master’s degree in the subject they teach and eliminating the requirement that teachers pay for their own substitutes when they take a personal leave day. His plan also includes investments to recruit, retain, and support quality teachers, offers more professional development opportunities, and expands the Teaching Fellows program.

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“If we want our educators to teach well, we need to treat them well,” Gov. Cooper said. “That means better pay, more opportunities to grow in their profession, and treating them like the professionals they are.”

The governor’s budget also provides \$40 million to hire more school nurses, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and school resource officers and \$15 million for safety improvements and training at K-12 schools, and \$29 million in new funding for schools to purchase more textbooks, digital resources, instructional supplies, and enhanced digital learning opportunities for students.

Read more about the governor’s plan for stronger schools [HERE](http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=38109465&msgid=448593&act=E9NM&c=1346310&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fgovernor.nc.gov%2Fnews%2Fgov-cooper-launches-plan-better-teachers-pay-stronger-public-schools)
<<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=38109465&msgid=448593&act=E9NM&c=1346310&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fgovernor.nc.gov%2Fnews%2Fgov-cooper-launches-plan-better-teachers-pay-stronger-public-schools>> .

Invest NC

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To invest in better schools from kindergarten through college as well as other critical infrastructure, Gov. Cooper proposes putting a bond worth \$3.9 billion to a vote of the people in November of 2020.

“A bond is the smartest way to invest in school construction and renovation and other critical needs without causing harmful cuts elsewhere. With a school bond, we’ll get hammers swinging all across the state,” Gov. Cooper said.

The proposed bond would include \$2 billion for K-12 public schools statewide to help meet the need for at least \$8 billion in new construction and renovations.

The bond would include \$500 million each for facility improvements at community colleges and University of North Carolina System institutions and \$800 million to invest in local water and sewer projects. The proposal would also invest \$100 million in the NC History Museum and the NC Zoo, cultural institutions that help educate North Carolinians and contribute to the economy.

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A bond is the fiscally responsible option for making these investments, offering stability for school districts, colleges and universities, and local governments planning their budgets. It also allows the people of North Carolina the chance to voice their opinion on making these public investments.

Read more about Invest NC HERE

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Expanding Medicaid

Gov. Cooper's budget plan recommends expanding Medicaid to bring \$4 billion into North Carolina's economy, create an estimated 40,000 jobs and provide more affordable health care for 500,000 people. North Carolina would become the 38th state to expand Medicaid to cover people who currently earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to afford private health insurance.

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Expanding Medicaid would assist rural hospitals in keeping their doors open, help fight the opioid epidemic, and secure North Carolina's share of federal tax dollars that are currently paying to support Medicaid expansion in other states.

"It's time to help the half a million North Carolinians without health insurance, doctors, nurses and our rural hospitals, law enforcement fighting opioids, businesses, and our overall economy by expanding Medicaid," Gov. Cooper said.

Preparing North Carolinians for Good Jobs

Gov. Cooper and other North Carolina leaders are committed to the goal of ensuring that 2 million working-age North Carolinians have a degree or credential beyond high school by 2030. To get there, Gov. Cooper proposes NC GROW
<<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=38109465&msgid=448593&act=E9NM&c=1346310&destination=https%3A%2F%2Ffiles.nc.gov%2Fgovernor%2Fdocuments%2Ffiles%2FNCGROW.PDF>> —Getting Ready for Opportunities in the Workforce—a scholarship program to help people get community college degrees and job training.

The governor's budget invests \$30 million in NC GROW scholarships to cover last-dollar tuition and fees for North Carolina community college students enrolled in high-demand fields.

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Another \$15 million over two years would provide up to \$1,000 per student to pursue non-credit, short-term workforce credentials for jobs like construction, information technology, and electrical line worker.

“A good-paying job is the key to economic security, but workers need the right skills to get the best jobs,” Gov. Cooper said. “Helping people get the education and training they need to succeed helps families and our entire economy thrive.”

The governor’s recommended budget also expands the Finish Line Grants program he launched last year. Finish Line grants help students who face unforeseen financial emergencies like housing, car repairs and childcare stay in school and complete their training. Already, more than 500 Finish Line Grants have helped students stay on track to finish school.

Gov. Cooper wants to expand the Finish Line Grants program to include students at all North Carolina colleges and universities. His budget proposal includes funding to provide grants of up to \$1,000 each to at least 15,000 students so they can finish their degree. The plan includes \$15 million in total for grants to students at community colleges, UNC System schools, and private colleges and universities.

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NC GROW and Finish Line grants are key parts of NC Job Ready <http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=38109465&msgid=448593&act=E9NM&c=1346310&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fncjobready.nc.gov%2F> , Gov. Cooper's initiative to prepare North Carolinians for the jobs of today and tomorrow and connect employers with the skilled workers they need to grow and succeed.

Also included in the governor's budget plan is \$31.6 million to help the UNC System improve graduation rates and help students finish their degrees and join the workforce more quickly.

Economic Opportunities

To bring economic opportunity to all parts of North Carolina, Gov. Cooper's budget includes \$145 million for rural economic development, expanded internet access, and more affordable housing.

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“These investments will help communities attract more businesses, create more good jobs, and improve their quality of life.” Gov. Cooper said.

His plan creates the Rural Investments Strengthening Economies (RISE) Program, investing \$15 million over two years to revitalize communities and encourage companies to locate or expand in North Carolina’s 80 rural counties. It also provides a combined \$13 million to support rural economic development projects through infrastructure improvements and site development and includes \$55 million for locally-identified economic development projects.

High-speed internet access is critical for economic and educational opportunity. Gov. Cooper’s budget includes \$35 million for efforts to bring broadband internet service to areas with no or slow service, encourage private providers to develop broadband in underserved areas, and close the homework gap for students without home internet access.

A shortage of quality, affordable housing is also a challenge for many communities. Gov. Cooper’s proposed budget adds an extra \$2.3 million for the Housing Trust Fund, \$20 million for the Workforce Housing Loan Program, \$7.2 million for the Community Living Housing Fund to increase access to housing for people with disabilities, and \$6.5 million for Rural Neighborhood Revitalization grants to help local governments improve neighborhoods.

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In addition, Gov. Cooper's budget includes changes to help revitalize North Carolina's film industry. For productions that want to qualify for a state grant to film in North Carolina, it lowers the minimum spending requirements and increases project grant caps. By fully funding the program this year and providing more consistent funding moving forward, North Carolina can again be a top destination for film jobs.

The governor's budget includes raises for state employees—the greater of 1.5% or \$500—with an additional \$500 for certain state employees who work in law enforcement, prisons, and mental health facilities. State retirees would get a one-time 2% cost of living adjustment under the governor's plan.

Healthier Communities

In addition to recommending Medicaid expansion, Gov. Cooper's budget helps North Carolina communities grow healthier with key investments in early childhood opportunities, fighting the opioid epidemic, and protecting water quality and our environment.

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The plan invests more than \$95 million over two years in early education and child development, helping implement North Carolina's Early Childhood Action Plan <http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=38109465&msgid=448593&act=E9NM&c=1346310&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fgovernor.nc.gov%2Fnews%2Fgovernor-cooper-releases-2019-nc-early-childhood-action-plan> . It adds over 2,000 more childcare subsidy slots each year for children from low-income working families to receive high-quality care and increases the NC Pre-K- reimbursement rate so more children can attend high-quality Pre-K. Smart Start would see a 10 percent increase to support families and children in all 100 counties, including by expanding home visiting programs.

To fight the opioid epidemic, Gov. Cooper's budget directs more than \$15 million to expand opioid treatment and recovery services. To help abused and neglected children, the plan provides \$1.1 million to improve child welfare services and add critical staffing and training.

To protect people's health and drinking water, Gov. Cooper's budget provides \$6.3 million to analyze water for emerging compounds and more than \$3 million to match federal funds for clean water and drinking water infrastructure. The proposal also sets aside funds to renovate and expand the state's primary environmental lab. The governor's plan invests in clean energy and protects waterways and green space by providing a combined \$20 million in additional funds to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

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“Investments in healthier, safer, greener communities contribute to our economy and make life better for everyday North Carolinians,” Gov. Cooper said.

Safer Communities

The governor’s budget plan invests in safer communities through funding to make prisons more secure, test evidence in criminal cases, implement the Raise the Age law, and hone disaster response.

To implement plans to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18, Gov. Cooper proposes approximately \$65 million in new funding over the biennium for juvenile justice staff and facilities and the court system. Gov. Cooper's budget also dedicates \$10 million to improve safety and security at state prisons through additional training and technology. To increase forensic testing of evidence, the plans calls for \$6 million to analyze untested sexual assault kits statewide and adds six new scientists for the State Crime Lab.

To prepare North Carolina for future natural disasters, the budget plan includes \$1.5 million for statewide search and rescue teams and \$250,000 for the North Carolina 2-1-1 network.

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Additionally, new positions are allocated within NC Emergency Management for disaster recovery and resilience, school safety, and cybersecurity. The State Emergency Response and Disaster Relief Fund receives an additional \$10 million to help ensure adequate immediate response funds are available in case of an emergency.

Gov. Cooper anticipates requesting more help for Hurricane Florence recovery once the state knows what additional assistance it will receive from the federal government. To date, North Carolinians have received more than \$1 billion in state and federal help to recover and rebuild from the storm.

“North Carolina is making strides to rebuild stronger and smarter from Hurricane Florence, and we will keep pushing in Washington and Raleigh to get storm survivors the help they need to recover,” Gov. Cooper said.