

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
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SENATE BILL DRS55032-NCa-2B

Short Title: Fix Republican Failures on Public Safety Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Grafstein and Batch (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO PROVIDE PAY INCREASES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND
3 CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS, TO ESTABLISH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR
4 PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL, AND TO ADDRESS THE STAFFING AND
5 RETENTION CRISIS CREATED BY REPUBLICAN FAILURES TO FUND PUBLIC
6 SAFETY.

7 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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9 **LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS**

10 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly finds that:

- 11 (1) For years, North Carolina Republicans have controlled the General Assembly
12 and had every opportunity to invest in the men and women who keep our
13 communities safe and they have failed to do so.
14 (2) As a direct result of Republican inaction, North Carolina is experiencing a
15 severe public safety staffing crisis. Law enforcement agencies across North
16 Carolina are struggling to recruit and retain qualified officers due to
17 non-competitive pay, leading to dangerous understaffing in communities
18 statewide.
19 (3) North Carolina law enforcement officers and correctional officers are among
20 the lowest-paid in the region, lagging behind neighboring states, including
21 Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee.
22 (4) High turnover and chronic understaffing compromise public safety and place
23 enormous strain on the officers who remain, contributing to burnout, mental
24 health challenges, and increased risk of on-the-job injury.
25 (5) The General Assembly has a responsibility to correct these Republican
26 failures, to invest in public safety, and to ensure North Carolina can recruit.
27

28 **LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER PAY INCREASES**

29 **SECTION 2.(a)** Effective July 1, 2026, the annual salary of each sworn law
30 enforcement officer employed by the State of North Carolina shall be increased by seven
31 thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500).

32 **SECTION 2.(b)** The Office of State Human Resources shall establish a competitive
33 salary schedule for law enforcement officers that accounts for years of service, rank, and regional
34 cost-of-living and shall update this schedule not less than every two years. At minimum, the
35 entry-level salary for a State Highway Patrol trooper shall be no less than sixty-two thousand five
36 hundred dollars (\$62,500) per year.



1 **SECTION 2.(c)** The Department of State Treasurer, in consultation with the Office
2 of State Budget and Management, shall make available to counties and municipalities a grant
3 program to assist local governments in providing comparable pay increases to locally employed
4 law enforcement officers.

5 **SECTION 2.(d)** For purposes of this section, "law enforcement officer" has the same
6 meaning as "criminal justice officer," as defined in G.S. 17C-2, and includes sheriffs' deputies
7 and municipal police officers.

8 9 **CORRECTIONAL OFFICER PAY INCREASES**

10 **SECTION 3.(a)** Effective July 1, 2026, the minimum starting salary for a
11 correctional officer employed by the Department of Adult Correction shall be forty-five thousand
12 dollars (\$45,000) per year. All currently employed correctional officers shall receive an annual
13 salary increase of eight thousand dollars (\$8,000), effective July 1, 2026.

14 **SECTION 3.(b)** The Secretary of Adult Correction shall develop a retention
15 incentive program that provides:

- 16 (1) A retention bonus of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) for each
17 correctional officer who completes five years of service.
- 18 (2) A retention bonus of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for each correctional
19 officer who completes 10 years of service.
- 20 (3) Enhanced hazard pay of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per year for officers
21 assigned to facilities operating at or below seventy percent (70%) of
22 authorized staffing levels.

23 **SECTION 3.(c)** The Department of Adult Correction shall report to the Joint
24 Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety on vacancy rates and staffing
25 levels quarterly, beginning October 1, 2026.

26 27 **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL**

28 **SECTION 4.(a)** The General Assembly finds that:

- 29 (1) Law enforcement officers and correctional officers experience
30 disproportionately high rates of posttraumatic stress, depression, anxiety, and
31 suicide compared to the general population.
- 32 (2) Stigma and lack of access to confidential services remain significant barriers
33 to officers seeking mental health treatment.
- 34 (3) Addressing officer mental health is inseparable from addressing officer
35 retention and public safety outcomes.

36 **SECTION 4.(b)** The State Health Plan, in coordination with the Department of
37 Health and Human Services and the Department of Adult Correction, shall:

- 38 (1) Ensure that all law enforcement officers and correctional officers covered
39 under the State Health Plan have access to a minimum of 12 confidential
40 mental health visits per year at no cost to the officer, with confidentiality
41 protections that prevent disclosure to supervisors or employing agencies.
- 42 (2) Maintain a dedicated, 24-hour mental health crisis line staffed by clinicians
43 with training specific to public safety personnel.

44 **SECTION 4.(c)** The Department of Public Safety and the Department of Adult
45 Correction shall each establish a peer support program that does the following:

- 46 (1) Trains and certifies peer support officers in evidence-based mental health first
47 aid and crisis intervention;
- 48 (2) Provides peer support officers with appropriate protected leave to perform
49 peer support duties; and
- 50 (3) Partners with The University of North Carolina System and the Community
51 College System to develop and deliver peer support training curricula.

1 **SECTION 4.(d)** Beginning January 1, 2028, and then annually thereafter, the
2 Department of Public Safety and the Department of Adult Correction shall each report annually
3 to the General Assembly on:

- 4 (1) The number of officers utilizing mental health services;
- 5 (2) Officer suicide rates and trends;
- 6 (3) Retention and vacancy data correlated with mental health programs; and
- 7 (4) Recommendations for program improvements.

8 9 **APPROPRIATIONS**

10 **SECTION 5.** To fund the compensation increases awarded in this act and to carry
11 out the other purposes of this act, the following funds are appropriated, effective July 1, 2026:

- 12 (1) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office of State Budget and
13 Management the sum of thirty-three million one hundred thousand dollars
14 (\$33,100,000) in recurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to fund a State
15 law enforcement officer pay raise of seven thousand five hundred dollars
16 (\$7,500).
- 17 (2) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Adult
18 Correction the sum of ninety-three million one hundred thousand dollars
19 (\$93,100,000) in recurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to fund
20 correctional officer pay raises of eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) and other
21 compression adjustments.
- 22 (3) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public
23 Safety the sum of eight million nine hundred thousand dollars (\$8,900,000) in
24 recurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to fund correctional officer pay
25 raises of eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) and other compression adjustments.
- 26 (4) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Adult
27 Correction the sum of one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000)
28 in recurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to fund retention bonuses.
- 29 (5) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Adult
30 Correction the sum of nine million one hundred thousand dollars (\$9,100,000)
31 for the 2026-2027 fiscal year for hazard pay.
- 32 (6) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of the State
33 Treasurer the sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) in the
34 2026-2027 fiscal year for the LEO Local Government Grant Program.
- 35 (7) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Health Plan the sum
36 of thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) in the 2026-2027 fiscal year to fund the
37 mental health services expansion of 12 visits per year as provided by this act.
- 38 (8) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public
39 Safety the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in the 2026-2027 fiscal
40 year for peer support programs as provided by this act.

41 42 **EFFECTIVE DATE**

43 **SECTION 6.** Except as otherwise provided, this act becomes effective July 1, 2026.