



# 2019 Legislative Priorities

The voice of business for Eastern North Carolina

Our Chambers consider the following items the highest priorities for 2019:

**Community Colleges:** NCEAC requests investments in workforce training, including a start-up fund for new programs for local industry.

**Address Transportation Needs:** NCEA urges the General Assembly to address transportation plans that enhance the safety of area travelers while also serving to promote and enhance growth in Eastern North Carolina. We support DOT efforts to ensure new roadways in flood prone areas are elevated above flood levels of Hurricanes Matthew and Florence. Continue to upgrade Eastern North Carolina highways like US Highway 264/ Future Interstate 587, US Highway 17, US Highway 70/ Future Interstate 42 and US 301.

**Prevent ENC Flooding:** NCEAC urges our legislators to use the knowledge gained in the aftermath of Hurricanes Floyd, Matthew, and Florence to prevent flooding in future storms. We ask that State of North Carolina take the initiative and launch an effort to implement physical changes in the form of flood prevention measures to save lives and property along the various waterways in Eastern North Carolina. We encourage the state to consider the upstream management of water flow and its impact on the East.

**Continue Health Care Reform:** Continue efforts to reform Medicaid that include a provider led model of care phased in over 5 years and preservation of supplemental payments. Increase the number of North Carolinians with health insurance by closing the coverage gap. Preserve Certificate of Need. Support legislation which would allow for the creation of Association Health Plans, as well as statutory updates to small employer plan allowances.

**Update Medical Education Infrastructure and Workforce Needs:** The 40-year-old Brody medical education building has substantial deferred maintenance needs, is outdated and not configured for 21st century, state-of-the-art medical education and research. The outdated facility negatively impacts the ability to recruitment and retain physicians, faculty and researchers. Support ECU's request by fully funding for the planning and design of a new state-of-the-art medical education and research facility. To address the critical need for primary care physicians in NC, particularly rural areas, support ECU's request for recurring funds to incrementally increase Brody class size to 120 students per class.

Additionally, our Chambers consider the following items the priorities for 2019:

**Support Models for Regional Health Care Delivery:** Support Project Unify, which integrates Vidant Medical Group and ECU Physicians into a more cohesive and efficient system.

**Economic Development:** Predominately rural Eastern North Carolina is not seeing the economic growth being enjoyed by more urban areas of the state. NCEAC encourages our delegation to make it a priority of the Department of Commerce or the Economic Development Partnership of NC to create and implement a true rural development strategy.

**Address Needs of Veterans:** Eastern NC is home to a larger percentage of active duty military and Veterans than any other region of the state. We encourage the General Assembly to explore state options that would expand medical care for veterans.

**Preserve Hospital Sales Tax Exemption:** Hospitals do more than their fair share for communities every day. A change to the tax code may cost hospitals about 30 percent of their annual revenue stream. This would cripple their ability to deliver on their mission to provide patient care.

**Reciprocity of Licensure:** Transferability of licensures is a priority for the State of NC to ensure we are recruiting and retaining skilled workforce.

**Early Education:** NCEAC request that the General Assembly expand quality pre-k slots and increase teacher and early educator pay.

**Public Education:** NCEAC requests the General Assembly show a commitment to compensation for educators and school administrators that gives North Carolina a competitive advantage to recruit talent to the profession. Without professional pay, rural Eastern North Carolina counties are at a greater disadvantage in teacher recruitment and retention. Allow capital projects for public education to be funded through bond initiatives. Counties throughout North Carolina are unable to provide the needed resources for building maintenance and capital improvements without additional sources of revenue.

**Community Colleges:** Increasing student completion of degrees and certificates requires additional funding for student support services. Fund short-term continuing education programs at the same rate as curriculum programs. Allow colleges to earn FTE for Instruction in local jails. Allow community colleges to use performance-based funds for performance-based bonuses for faculty and staff. As with public education, professional salaries for faculty and staff are vital for the economic development of eastern North Carolina.

**Address Transportation Needs:** Invest in better rail access in Eastern NC to support economic development in the east. Provide for long term planning and funding to maintain our inland waterways for our ports and fishing fleets.

**Invest in Broadband:** Broadband availability improves quality of life by raising property values and attracting a dynamic workforce. It is important for agriculture and advanced manufacturing. Require more accurate reporting of broadband capability so more counties in Eastern NC can be eligible for broadband expansion funds. NCEAC requests that the General

Assembly explore all options to level the playing field so Eastern North Carolina can compete with other areas of the state that have greater broadband coverage.

**Protect Water Quality:** With recent regulatory reform efforts, special care should be taken to preserve the water quality in our region, particularly in terms of upstream management.

**Affordable Housing:** Expand and Protect Affordable Housing: Prioritize safe and affordable housing by advancing repair and replacement efforts from recent natural disasters; support robust funding of North Carolina's Housing Trust Fund at \$20 million, increase the Workforce Housing Loan Program to \$50 million, and designate a significant portion of the state's Small Cities' Community Development Block Grant (DBG) allocation for rural housing repair and rehabilitation needs.

**Sustain a Military Friendly Climate:** Provide necessary resources & support for local communities to protect the current strategic mission of military bases in the East. Reintroduce and support the Military Operations Protection Act to protect the training and low-level flight routes around our military installations. Continue initiative to recognize military training towards state requirements and to expand access to institutions of higher education. Support for the Preservation Trust Fund's request of \$12,820,865 in matching funds for the protection of 25,000 acres of farmland and forestland within NC in order to fund conservation easements and to preserve training capabilities around military bases in NC.

**Agriculture:** As the number one economic engine in the State of NC, we advocate for increased support of the Agriculture community who, in recent years, has been devastated by natural disasters.