

2020 (FY21) FEDERAL PRIORITIES FOR NC COUNTIES: A Quick Guide to Our Issues

Go to www.ncacc.org/federalissues for more information.

New! COVID-19 Federal Relief

Support Direct and Flexible Financial Assistance to Local Governments of All Sizes

Fiscal impacts from the pandemic are causing significant revenue losses and budget shortfalls for county governments, while counties are still required by law to provide mandated services and balance their budgets.

Support Increased Funding for Disaster Preparation, Assistance and Mitigation as well as Legislation that Expedites and Expands County Use of Federal Disaster Assistance Funds

— In 2016, Hurricane Matthew caused an estimated \$4.8 billion in damage to North Carolina. Before Matthew recovery was complete, Hurricane Florence caused at least \$17 billion in damage and took 43 lives in September 2018. One month later, Tropical Storm Michael took additional lives, caused millions more in damage, and left state and local resources strained even further. Counties in North Carolina also sustained damage from Hurricanes Dorian and Isaias. Counties throughout the state need long-term federal assistance for recovery and disaster preparedness efforts before more storms occur. Counties need flexibility when receiving and prioritizing funds, and counties need resources to get to communities in a timely manner.

Support Funding for Behavioral Health Programs and Services to Address the Opioid and Substance Abuse Epidemic and Support Flexibility for Counties to Use Funds for Prevention and Recovery

— The United States is in the midst of an unprecedented opioid and substance abuse epidemic. North Carolina counties are on the front lines of this battle working with the state to develop and fund substance abuse and overdose inhibition programs, but progress is limited without consistent funding and support from Congress.

Support Funding and Legislation to Expand High-Speed Broadband Access

— Adequate digital infrastructure is essential for education, economic development, health care and social services; however, many portions of North Carolina counties do not have access to high-speed Internet. Counties urge Congress to provide digital infrastructure funding and adopt legislation that clarifies Federal Communications Commission (FCC) definitions for speed thresholds and unserved areas.

Support Measures to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illness in County Jails Such as Those Identified in NACo's "Stepping Up Initiative"

— In North Carolina, 17 percent of the total inmate population has a mental health diagnosis. Without appropriate treatment and services, people with mental illnesses can continue to cycle through the criminal justice system. Legislation and federal funding are needed to help counties develop and implement efforts to reduce the number of people with mental illness in county jails.

Support Funds for Health, Human and Economic Services Programs Including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food and Nutrition Services and Federal Block Grants

— Counties are the first responders providing services to the public locally and, in particular, our nation's vulnerable populations. Since many of these services are mandated by federal law the federal government provides funding to assist states and counties in meeting local demands—this funding should be protected in upcoming budgets.

Support Funding for Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT), Agricultural, Conservation, Workforce, Economic Development, and Infrastructure Programs that Help Counties Meet Public Needs — Funding for programs that maintain partnerships between federal and county governments in meeting demand for public services should remain a priority for Congress. In both rural and urban areas, counties rely on federal-local partnerships to support community and economic development, and public infrastructure.

Support Coordination with State and Local Governments when a Federal Agency, such as EPA, Seeks to Regulate Emerging Contaminants and Other Discharges into Drinking Water Sources — The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies certain large and complex industrial chemicals called per-and-polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) as “emerging contaminants” that need research so that the agency can set limits. Counties urge Congress to insist that the EPA maintains coordination with state and local governments throughout this process.

Oppose Unfunded Mandates and Changes in Eligibility for Federal Programs that Shift Costs to Counties — Reductions in federal deficits should not be accomplished by shifting costs to counties, imposing unfunded mandates. Counties also oppose any legislative or regulatory initiatives that undermine local government decision making authority or pre-empt county programs and taxing authority.

Support Timely Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, including Greater Flexibility and Increased Funding to Fully Restore Programs to Pre-Sequestration Levels – On March 25, 2020, President Trump signed H.R. 4334, the Supporting Older Americans Act (OAA) of 2020 into law. The law reauthorizes the OAA for five years (through 2024) and increases funding levels for its programs by seven percent in FY20 and by six percent each year from 2021 to 2024. No further action is needed at this time.

Strengthen County Involvement in WIOA Funded Federal Youth Programs – The primary authority for federal programs that help disconnected youth is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Counties should be involved in developing local plans to support disconnected youth under WIOA.