

Keeping North Carolinians Safe

Recommendation

Provides \$194.1 million in FY 2025-26 and \$209.6 million in FY 2026-27 to defend North Carolina communities against school- and community-based violence and combat the fentanyl and opioid crisis. Funds support school safety measures, salary increases, bonuses, and communications for public safety personnel, resources to reduce overdoses and stop the spread of fentanyl, violence prevention initiatives, body cameras for state law enforcement officers (LEOs), and capacity to deliver justice for crime victims.

Table 1: Allocation of Funds for Protecting North Carolinians

<i>Protecting Students and Teachers in Schools</i>	Agency	FY 2025-26		FY 2026-27	
School Resource Officers	DPI	\$63,000,000	R	\$93,000,000	R
School Safety Grants	SBI	\$10,000,000	NR		
Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit Social Workers	SBI	\$232,316	R	\$232,316	R
		\$26,968	NR		
	Subtotal	\$73,259,284		\$93,232,316	
<i>Supporting Our Public Personnel</i>					
Correctional Officer Salary Investment	DAC	\$33,545,000	R	\$33,545,000	R
VIPER Network Sustainment and Radios	DPS, SBI	\$20,000,000	R	\$20,000,000	R
Funds for Staff on Pay Plans	Various	\$16,835,000	R	\$16,835,000	R
Bonuses for New and Relocating Officers	DOJ	\$15,500,000	R	\$15,500,000	R
NC National Guard Referral, Extension Bonuses	DPS	\$1,500,000	R	\$1,500,000	R
	Subtotal	\$87,380,000		\$87,380,000	
<i>Preventing and Combating Fentanyl, Other Drugs, and Crime</i>					
Medication for Opioid Use Disorder	DAC	\$10,100,000	R	\$10,100,000	R
Co-Responder Team Rural Expansion	DHHS	\$8,700,000	R	\$8,700,000	R
NC Secure All Firearms Effectively Campaign	DPS	\$2,261,442	R	\$2,261,442	R
Fentanyl Control Unit	SBI	\$972,481	R	\$972,481	R
		\$362,843	NR		
Fentanyl Control Prosecutors	DOJ	\$505,753	R	\$505,753	R
Governor's Crime Commission Violence Prevention Grants	DPS	\$250,000	R	\$250,000	R
Sexual Assault Cold Case Unit	SBI	\$240,634	R	\$240,634	R
		\$26,968	NR		
	Subtotal	\$23,420,121		\$23,030,310	
<i>Distributing Body Cameras</i>					
State Highway Patrol Troopers	DPS	\$766,650	R	\$766,650	R
		\$3,900,000	NR		
Probation and Parole Officers	DAC	\$3,272,785	R	\$3,272,785	R
DNCR LEOs	DNCR	\$1,050,499	R	\$1,050,499	R
All Other Field-Based LEOS	Various	\$849,708	R	\$849,708	R
		\$242,304	NR		
	Subtotal	\$10,081,946		\$5,939,642	
Totals for Recurring and Nonrecurring		\$179,582,268	R	\$209,582,268	R
		\$14,559,083	NR		
Grand Total		\$194,141,351		\$209,582,268	

Recommendation Detail

Protecting Students and Teachers in Schools

Schools should be safe environments that enable children to learn and grow. However, acts of crime and violence in schools are up 9.3% from the 2021-22 school year to 2023-24, including an 80.8% increase in bomb threats and hoaxes.¹ The Governor's Recommended Budget supports funding at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for school resource officers (SROs) at elementary and middle schools and for their initial and continuing training. The State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) will receive funding for school safety grants to strengthen security with equipment including cameras, exterior locks and fences, and metal detectors. The Center for Safer Schools at SBI will administer these grants to local districts. SBI will also add two social workers to its Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit to develop individualized management and mitigation plans for cases, which reduce the risk of violence. Since 54% of the unit's cases involve juveniles, this work will also improve school safety.

Supporting Our Public Personnel

State and local public safety agencies face challenges recruiting and retaining officers, including both sworn LEOs and certified public safety officers, to keep people safe. Correctional officers (COs) have a vacancy rate of almost 38%, with some facilities experiencing vacancy rates over 60%. From 2014 to 2024, the State Highway Patrol (SHP) saw Trooper applications decline 75%. Under Governor Stein's plan, COs and youth counselors will receive a 6.5% salary increase to make their compensation more competitive, increasing starting pay to over \$40,000. Other public safety personnel on legislative pay plans, including SHP Troopers, probation and parole officers, and juvenile court counselors, will receive a 3% salary increase. The Governor's Recommended Budget also establishes bonuses for NC National Guard referrals or extensions and for newly hired Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) graduates and out-of-state BLET-certified transfers who dedicate themselves to protecting their fellow North Carolinians.

First responders must be able to communicate with other state and local agencies during disasters. This proposal also provides stable funding for the Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders (VIPER), which will enable over 200,000 first responders across the state to communicate on a secure radio network, even if phone signals fail as they did immediately after Hurricane Helene.

Preventing and Combating Fentanyl, Other Drugs, and Crime

On average, six North Carolinians died every day from fentanyl overdose between October 2023 to September 2024.² In addition, 20-30% of people in state prisons suffer from opioid use disorder. A new Fentanyl Control Unit of prosecutors in the Department of Justice and drug agents and financial investigators in SBI will provide more resources and help local law enforcement to stop the flow of narcotics, investigate these cases, and enhance community safety. The Department of Adult Correction (DAC) will receive funds to expand the use of medication to treat opioid use disorder to all correctional institutions following the success of regional pilot programs.

In 2023, there were also 2,800 reported sexual assault cases in North Carolina.³ SBI currently has no staff dedicated to unresolved sexual assault cases. The Governor's Recommended Budget provides SBI

¹ NC Department of Public Instruction, [2023-2024 Consolidated Data Report](#).

² NC Department of Health and Human Services, [Fentanyl-Positive Deaths, North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner \(OCME\) Toxicology Data: Sep 2024](#).

³ NC State Bureau of Investigation, [2023-Annual-Summary.aspx](#).

funding for sexual assault cold case positions to assist and train local law enforcement to pursue these investigations and bring criminals to justice.

Firearm fatalities was the leading cause of death for children and teens in North Carolina in 2022, and the overall rate of firearm fatalities throughout the state increased 39% from 2013 to 2022.⁴ Funding provided to the Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention within DPS will continue the critical statewide Secure all Firearms Effectively (NC SAFE) campaign. NC SAFE distributes gun locks and safes and provides violence prevention education and programming statewide. Additionally, a competitive grant program through the Governor's Crime Commission and an expansion of state funded co-response teams in 50 rural counties will supply violence prevention and behavioral health crisis response services to local communities.

Distributing Body Cameras

Body cameras have many benefits. They provide crucial evidence in investigations by more accurately documenting interactions and improve preparedness by using situation-based training modeled after officers' previous encounters. A Police Executive Research Forum survey in 2013 found that 94% of responding law enforcement agencies nationwide incorporate body camera footage in their training and administrative reviews.⁵ Upfront purchasing costs and recurring storage costs have prevented all agencies from getting them for their officers. Governor Stein's Recommended Budget includes investments in the following agencies and divisions to ensure all field-based state agency LEOs have body cameras:

- Administrative Office of the Courts;
- Department of Adult Correction;
- Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;
- Department of Environmental Quality;
- Department of Insurance and the NC Insurance Commission;
- Department of Natural and Cultural Resources;
- Department of Revenue;
- Department of the Secretary of State;
- Department of Transportation;
- NC General Assembly; and
- Alcohol Law Enforcement, State Capitol Police, and State Highway Patrol.

Expected Impact

This proposal will increase public safety in North Carolina, reducing crimes and the resulting harm by:

- Decreasing officer vacancy rates and therefore reducing costs, like CO overtime pay.
- Placing 330 new SROs in elementary and middle schools and providing SRO training on the social and cognitive development of elementary and middle school children, behavioral health, and trauma-informed practices in schools.
- Reducing fentanyl use and overdoses throughout the state.
- Increasing closed sexual assault cold cases and trauma-informed justice for victims.
- Providing more than 3,300 officers with body cameras, enhancing accountability, transparency, and public trust.
- Decreasing firearm violence in communities.

⁴ Johns Hopkins University, [State Data: North Carolina | Center for Gun Violence Solutions](#)

⁵ Police Executive Research Forum, [Implementing a Body-Worn Camera Program: Recommendations and Lessons Learned](#).