

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2019

H.B. 461
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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH30202-LGa-102

Short Title: Funds for Fort Fisher Aquarium. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Davis and McElraft (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA
3 AQUARIUM AT FORT FISHER.

4 Whereas, the Aquarium at Fort Fisher is the most popular of the State's three
5 aquariums and the most visited attraction in southeastern North Carolina, having 493,603 visitors
6 in 2018; and

7 Whereas, annually, the Aquarium hosts more than 25,000 North Carolina school
8 students, reaches an additional 10,000 students through its Outreach programs with travelling
9 classrooms, and attracts over 120,000 participants to its educational programs, camps, and field
10 trips; and

11 Whereas, the Aquarium is an important resource for youth groups such as the 4-H,
12 scouts, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Clubs, all of which participate in camps and programs at the
13 facility; and

14 Whereas, the Aquarium also has a large and active volunteer force with over 505 local
15 volunteers who contributed nearly 32,000 hours of service during 2018, working in education
16 and animal care; and

17 Whereas, the Aquarium structure is over 40 years old, having had its last capital
18 renovation in 2002; and

19 Whereas, since 2002, the Aquarium has had more than 6.4 million visitors; and

20 Whereas, a refresh of the Aquarium's galleries and exhibits is needed to sustain the
21 Aquarium's popularity and to better serve its educational mission; and

22 Whereas, plans have been made for the renovation of the facility to include structural
23 upgrades, updated displays, redesigned classroom spaces, a new otter habitat, a new large feature
24 aquarium to display sand tiger sharks, and other improvements; and

25 Whereas, the expansion project is estimated to cost \$20 million, of which the
26 Aquarium plans to raise \$5 million through its capital campaign by the North Carolina Aquarium
27 Society and \$5 million through admission receipts; and

28 Whereas, State funds are needed to complete the project; Now, therefore,
29 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

30 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
31 Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of North Carolina Aquariums, the sum of ten million
32 dollars (\$10,000,000) for the 2019-2020 fiscal year in nonrecurring funds for expansion of the
33 North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher.

34 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2019.

