

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

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SENATE BILL DRS45538-MTa-165A

Short Title: Expand Income Tax Assistance in NC. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Crawford, deViere, and Mohammed (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A GRANT PROGRAM AT NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY  
3 COLLEGES TO EXPAND INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE IN THE STATE AND TO  
4 PROVIDE FUNDS TO THE UNITED WAY OF NORTH CAROLINA TO EXPAND ITS  
5 VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

6 Whereas, it is estimated that 180,000 North Carolina filers are eligible for the Federal  
7 Earned Income Tax Credit but do not claim the credit; and

8 Whereas, it is estimated that the average Earned Income Tax Credit is about \$2,400  
9 per filer; and

10 Whereas, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provides a federal program, the  
11 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, for which grants are available. VITA  
12 provides for individuals who make below a certain income threshold per year to get their taxes  
13 done by an IRS certified individual for free, allowing them to take full advantage of every federal  
14 tax credit and return more of North Carolina's hard-earned dollars to our citizens, putting more  
15 money into our economy; and

16 Whereas, community colleges can provide work-based learning opportunities for  
17 students; Now, therefore,

18 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

19  
20 **PART I. GRANT PROGRAM AT NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO**  
21 **EXPAND INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE IN THE STATE**

22 **SECTION 1.(a)** Program Established. – Within the funds appropriated in subsection  
23 (d) of this section, the State Board of Community Colleges shall establish a grant program for  
24 participating community college campuses to offer courses to students to become tax preparers  
25 as part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and to facilitate providing VITA  
26 services to all students on campus, as well as community members. The Internal Revenue Service  
27 (IRS) offers free tax help through VITA to (i) people who generally make fifty-eight thousand  
28 dollars (\$58,000) or less, (ii) persons with disabilities, and (iii) limited English-speaking  
29 taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. The goal of the grant program  
30 shall be for community colleges to provide work-based opportunities to students while  
31 facilitating access to the VITA program for their local communities.

32 **SECTION 1.(b)** Components of the Program. – In administering the grant program,  
33 the State Board of Community Colleges shall require participating community colleges to do at  
34 least the following:

- 35 (1) Offer the following courses to students interested in becoming certified as tax  
36 preparers for the VITA program:



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1 a. A fall curriculum course for the purposes of teaching basic tax  
2 accounting and training students on the preparation of federal and  
3 North Carolina tax returns. The course shall lead to the completion of  
4 the IRS Link and Learn training to become certified as tax preparers  
5 for the VITA program.

6 b. A spring work-based learning course where students commit to 15  
7 hours per week from January through April 15 to prepare taxes.

8 (2) Designate a faculty champion to facilitate the program.

9 (3) Provide VITA services to be offered to all students on campus as well as  
10 community members.

11 **SECTION 1.(c)** Applications for Grants. – A community college shall apply for a  
12 grant to the State Board with a plan to implement the VITA program on its campus with at least  
13 the following information:

14 (1) A time line for implementing the curriculum and a recruitment of students to  
15 become certified as VITA tax preparers.

16 (2) Options for paid work-based opportunities for students as part of the spring  
17 curriculum. Students shall be provided hourly compensation for tax  
18 preparation assistance during tax season as part of the program.

19 (3) Start-up and ongoing costs for personnel, including site coordinators and  
20 quality reviewers, and budget for continuing costs for running the VITA  
21 program.

22 **SECTION 1.(d)** Appropriation. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to  
23 the Community Colleges System Office the sum of one million three hundred four thousand one  
24 hundred dollars (\$1,304,100) in nonrecurring funds and five hundred seventy thousand one  
25 hundred dollars (\$570,100) in recurring funds for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to implement the  
26 grant program in accordance with this act. The funds shall be used as follows with any  
27 unexpended funds returned to the System Office:

28 (1) For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the sum of seven hundred fifty-five thousand  
29 one hundred dollars (\$755,100) in nonrecurring funds may be used for  
30 creation of the curriculum, for bonuses of up to one thousand five hundred  
31 dollars (\$1,500) per community college receiving a grant to support a faculty  
32 champion on campus, to support hiring personnel for the VITA program, and  
33 to establish work-based learning opportunities for students.

34 (2) For the 2022-2023 fiscal year and for subsequent fiscal years, five hundred  
35 seventy thousand one hundred dollars (\$570,100) in recurring funds may be  
36 used to support hiring personnel for the VITA program and to establish  
37 work-based learning opportunities for students. The System Office may use  
38 up to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) of the recurring funds appropriated for  
39 the program each fiscal year for administrative costs associated with  
40 administering the grant program.

41 **SECTION 1.(e)** Of the nonrecurring funds appropriated to the Community Colleges  
42 System Office in subsection (d) of this section for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the sum of up to  
43 five hundred forty-nine thousand dollars (\$549,000) shall not revert at the end of the 2022-2023  
44 fiscal year but shall remain available until the end of the 2023-2024 fiscal year to provide bonuses  
45 of up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00) per community college receiving a grant to support a  
46 faculty champion on campus, to support hiring personnel for the VITA program, and to establish  
47 work-based learning opportunities for students.

48 **SECTION 1.(f)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of  
49 Revenue the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in nonrecurring funds and one hundred  
50 thousand dollars (\$100,000) in recurring funds for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to provide training  
51 and technical assistance to community college campus personnel and students participating in

1 the grant program in accordance with this act. The Department of Revenue may use the funds  
2 appropriated pursuant to this section to contract with a third-party vendor to provide technical  
3 assistance and support for the program.  
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5 **PART II. FUNDS TO THE UNITED WAY OF NORTH CAROLINA TO EXPAND ITS**  
6 **VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

7 **SECTION 2.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office of State  
8 Budget and Management the sum of eight hundred forty thousand dollars (\$840,000) in  
9 nonrecurring funds for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to be allocated as a directed grant to the United  
10 Way of North Carolina to expand its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. These  
11 funds shall be used to increase the number of VITA locations, provide dedicated staff to support  
12 evaluation of the program and recruitment, provide needed software and office supplies for the  
13 program, and improve marketing and communication efforts to include multilingual materials,  
14 connection to online resources where internet is available, and educational opportunities on  
15 household budgeting, financial planning, and other resources to improve financial skills. These  
16 funds shall not revert at the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year but shall remain available until the  
17 end of the 2023-2024 fiscal year.  
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19 **PART III. EFFECTIVE DATE**

20 **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2022.