A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING CERTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADVISORY PANEL ON CANCER RESEARCH AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 130A-208 reads as rewritten:

"§ 130A-208. Central cancer registry; powers and duties.
A central cancer registry is established within the Department. The central cancer registry shall compile, have the following powers and duties:
(1) Compile, tabulate and preserve statistical, clinical, and other reports and records pursuant to this Part relating to the incidence, treatment, and cure of cancer received pursuant to this Part. The central cancer registry shall provide assistance and consultation for public health work.
(2) Provide supervision of the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch and the Department of Environmental Quality, in a way that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness.
(3) Serve as the lead agency for cancer cluster inquiries and investigations in North Carolina, as provided in G.S. 130A-208.5."

SECTION 2. Part 1 of Article 7 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes is amended by adding the following new sections to read:

"§ 130A-208.5. Lead agency for cancer cluster investigations.
As the lead agency for cancer cluster investigations in North Carolina, the central cancer registry shall oversee the coordination of State-level efforts and activities related to cancer cluster inquiries and investigations, including efforts and activities by the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch and the Department of Environmental Quality, in a way that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness.

(a) The central cancer registry shall employ and retain an epidemiologist with knowledge, training, and experience in cancer epidemiology, including cancer cluster investigations, whose primary responsibility shall be to coordinate and communicate State-level cancer cluster activities. To fulfill this primary responsibility, the cancer epidemiologist shall have the following duties and powers:
(1) Lead State-level cancer cluster inquiries and investigations in collaboration with the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch and the Department of Environmental Quality, as appropriate.
(2) Serve as the single designated point of contact for State-level cancer cluster activities.
(3) Conduct routine cancer surveillance activities.
Proactively monitor cancer rates statewide, including analyzing patterns of cancer incidence over geographic areas and time.

Lead in the development, ongoing review, and updating of the statewide cancer cluster protocol established pursuant to G.S. 130A-208.7, with assistance from the Advisory Committee.

Develop and disseminate reports.

"§ 130A-208.7. Enhanced statewide cancer cluster protocol.

The central cancer registry, in collaboration with the cancer epidemiologist described in G.S. 130A-208.6, shall establish and periodically update an enhanced statewide cancer cluster protocol for addressing suspected cancer clusters within the State. The protocol shall be based on the most current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for public health agencies to assess and respond to potential cancer clusters. At a minimum, the protocol shall incorporate all of the following:

(1) Best practices for all phases of cancer cluster assessment, including (i) surveillance for identifying new cancer cases and monitoring trends, (ii) inquiries, and (iii) detection and investigation.

(2) State and local infrastructure needs.

(3) Innovative statistical methods, software tools, and analytic approaches for analyzing cancer rates and detecting cancer clusters.

(4) A comprehensive plan for internal communication within the Department, as well as external communication with local health departments, the community, the media, and other stakeholders."

SECTION 3.(a) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, the sum of three hundred fourteen thousand seven hundred seventy-seven dollars ($314,777) in recurring funds for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to be used as follows:

(1) $97,911 in recurring funds to create one full-time equivalent Cancer Registrar position within the central cancer registry dedicated to cancer cluster investigations.

(2) $84,890 in recurring funds to create one full-time equivalent Public Health Educator II position within the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch dedicated to assisting the Department of Health and Human Services and local health departments with communications during cancer cluster investigations and as the results of these investigations are made available to local health departments, the media, and the general public.

(3) $131,976 in recurring funds to create two full-time equivalent Certified Tumor Registrar positions within the central cancer registry dedicated to coordinating outreach, communication, and onboarding with physician practices to improve cancer case identification across the State. These positions shall be responsible for (i) designing and implementing an onboarding and training program to support increased compliance with State-mandated cancer case reporting requirements imposed on physician practices, (ii) providing training and, when necessary, retraining on cancer case reporting to physician practice staff, including case entry into a web-based application developed by the CDC and maintained by the central cancer registry information technology staff, and (iii) monitoring compliance with State-mandated cancer case reporting requirements.

SECTION 3.(b) The funds appropriated in this section to create full-time equivalent positions shall not be used to supplant any other source of funding for these positions.

SECTION 4. Section 3 of this act becomes effective July 1, 2022. The remainder of this act becomes effective October 1, 2022.