

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH30374-LRa-127A

Short Title: First Responder Bonus/Appreciation Fund/\$1500. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative A. Jones.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE 2025 FIRST RESPONDERS AND NURSES
APPRECIATION BONUS PROGRAM.
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. FIRST RESPONDER APPRECIATION BONUS PROGRAM

SECTION 1.1. The following definitions apply in this Part:

- (1) Appreciation bonus payment or bonus. – A one-time supplemental payment to a first responder that does not become part of the first responder's base salary.
- (2) Base salary. – The regular, recurring annual compensation of a first responder, excluding overtime pay, shift differentials, longevity pay, or any other supplemental forms of compensation.
- (3) Employing authority. – A State agency or a city, county, or other local political subdivision of this State that employs first responders.
- (4) First responder. – A public employee whose primary duties involve the protection of life, property, or public safety during emergency situations, including specifically:
 - a. Law enforcement officers.
 - b. Firefighters.
 - c. Emergency medical services personnel.
 - d. Public safety telecommunicators or dispatchers.
 - e. Nurses employed by public hospitals, health departments, correctional facilities, or other government healthcare facilities.
- (5) Public employee. – A person employed by an employing authority.
- (6) Years of service. – The total number of years that a first responder has been employed in a qualifying position by any employing authority within the State.

SECTION 1.2. Appropriation for First Responders' and Teachers' Appreciation Bonus Payments. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Safety the sum of one hundred thirty million dollars (\$130,000,000) in each year of the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium to provide one-time bonus payments to eligible first responders as defined in this act. The Department of Public Safety shall distribute these funds to employing authorities based on the number of eligible first responders employed by each authority. Each eligible first responder shall receive a bonus payment of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) in each fiscal year. Funds distributed under this section shall be used exclusively for



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bonus payments to eligible first responders and may not be used for administrative costs or other purposes. Bonus payments made pursuant to this section shall be:

- (1) Paid in addition to any other wages or benefits the first responder may be entitled and are not part of the first responder's base salary;
- (2) Treated as exempt from retirement deductions; and
- (3) Subject to all applicable federal and State withholding taxes.

SECTION 1.3. Administration. – The Office of State Budget and Management shall coordinate with the Department of Public Safety to distribute funds to employing authorities by no later than November 1 of each fiscal year within the 2025-2027 biennium. Employing authorities shall distribute bonus payments to eligible first responders no later than December 31 of each fiscal year. To be eligible for the bonus payment, a first responder must be employed by an employing authority on the first day of October of the fiscal year in which the bonus is paid. First responders who work less than full time shall receive a prorated bonus based on the percentage of full-time equivalent hours worked. The Office of State Budget and Management shall develop simplified procedures for the allocation and distribution of bonus funds and shall provide necessary guidance to the Department of Public Safety and employing authorities. The Department of Public Instruction shall assist in coordinating with local school administrative units, charter schools, and regional schools. Employing authorities shall certify to the Department of Public Safety the number of eligible first responders by October 15 of each fiscal year. By February 15 of each fiscal year, employing authorities shall submit a verification that all bonus payments have been distributed to eligible first responders. Any funds not expended for the purposes specified in this section by the end of each respective fiscal year shall revert to the General Fund.

PART II. TEACHERS' APPRECIATION BONUS PROGRAM

SECTION 2.1. Definition. – For purposes of this Part, the term "teacher" means a classroom teacher, instructional support personnel, principal, or assistant principal employed by any of the following: (i) a local school administrative unit, (ii) a charter school, (iii) a regional school, (iv) a school operated under Article 9C of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, or (v) a school operated under Article 29A of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes.

SECTION 2.2. Appropriation. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction the sum of one hundred sixty-five million dollars (\$165,000,000) in each year of the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium to provide one-time bonus payments to teachers. The Department of Public Instruction shall distribute these funds to local school administrative units, charter schools, and regional schools based on the number of eligible teachers employed by each entity. Each eligible teacher shall receive a bonus payment of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) in each fiscal year. Funds distributed under this section shall be used exclusively for bonus payments to eligible teachers and may not be used for administrative costs or other purposes. Bonus payments made pursuant to this section shall be:

- (1) Paid in addition to any other wages or benefits the first responder may be entitled and are not part of the first responder's base salary;
- (2) Treated as exempt from retirement deductions; and
- (3) Subject to all applicable federal and State withholding taxes.

SECTION 2.3. Administration. – The State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction shall establish procedures and guidelines for the administration of the teacher bonus program consistent with this section. The Department of Public Instruction shall distribute these funds to local school administrative units, charter schools, and regional schools no later than November 1 of each fiscal year within the 2025-2027 biennium. To be eligible for the bonus payment, a teacher must be employed by a local school administrative unit, charter school, or regional school on the first day of October of the fiscal year in which the bonus is paid. Teachers who work less than full time shall receive a prorated bonus based on the percentage of

1 full-time equivalent hours worked. Local school administrative units, charter schools, and
2 regional schools shall certify to the Department of Public Instruction the number of eligible
3 teachers by October 15 of each fiscal year. By February 15 of each fiscal year, local school
4 administrative units, charter schools, and regional schools shall submit a verification that all
5 bonus payments have been distributed to eligible teachers. Any funds not expended for the
6 purposes specified in this section by the end of each respective fiscal year shall revert to the
7 General Fund.

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9 **PART III. STATE BUDGET ACT**

10 **SECTION 3.1.** State Budget Act Applies. – The provisions of this act are subject to
11 compliance with Chapter 143C of the General Statutes. If there is a conflict between this act and
12 the State Budget Act (SBA), the provisions of the SBA shall control.

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14 **PART IV. EFFECTIVE DATE**

15 **SECTION 4.1.** Effective Date. – This act becomes effective July 1, 2025.