

Request for Remote Public Input for House Select Committee on COVID-19 Public Comments Report - LINC

Date Submitted	Category	Name	Comments
04/03/2020 03:14 PM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Ann Mitchell	<p>What a joke. In laurinburg the only ones closed are the downtown merchants. Everything else going strong. People do not understand what the order is. A lot tjonl6 it's a 5 o'clock curfew. Something needs to done. How is a tobacco shop wig shop and furniture store essential. The small mom and pop stores are paying the price and stores like walmart are booming. This large stores need to rope off areas that are not essential. Only fair to small business. Something needs to be done or we will be setting here in july. Also most gas station have pay at pump they do not have to open store .</p>
04/03/2020 03:18 PM	Health Care Working Group	Lisa Riegel	<p>We appreciate the work that the House Committee is undertaking to help our state respond to and best position us for the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic. We have several concerns and offer the following comments from AARP, on behalf of our over 1.1 million members in the state, their families and all older North Carolinians.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID 19 Testing and PPE: North Carolina should ensure access to testing for persons living in and those working in skilled nursing, assisted living, and other residential care facilities. Healthcare workers who serve these vulnerable residents should be adequately trained to limit exposure to themselves and to residents and have adequate protective equipment and cleaning supplies. • Telehealth and Broadband Access: The federal CARES Act expanded access to telehealth coverage and increased funding for additional telehealth services and capacity. It also builds on recent legislation and regulation to ensure that people with Medicare have access to providers in rural areas and at home. Telehealth allows individuals, particularly older Americans, to receive screenings without risking exposure or exposing others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o In North Carolina, many providers and payers voluntarily made provisions for access to care via telehealth. We encourage continuing on this important path to remove artificial and arbitrary geographic barriers for the use of telehealth to ensure that individuals can have access to their providers and specialty care. Could we require or encourage insurance companies to waive cost-sharing for COVID-19-related in-network telehealth visits? To make sure North Carolinians are aware of this potentially safer option, should carriers conduct an outreach and education campaign to remind individuals of their telehealth coverage options and to provide information on how to contact telehealth providers? More settings need to be allowed to be originating sites, including nursing homes and other long-term care settings and one's home. We need to utilize fully the Emergency Management Assistance Compact to ensure that North Carolinians have access to licensed health professionals from neighboring states, if appropriate, to assist when there are shortages. o Unfortunately so many in our state don't have access to high-speed internet (also known as broadband) that better enables telehealth – so supporting broadband access is key to expanding safe health care access. We would recommend considering solutions proposed such as the NC Fiber Act (HB 431) that removes barriers that prevent or inhibit local governments from collaborating with private providers for broadband expansion. Also, additional funding and expediting the distribution of funds via the GREAT grant

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			<p>program should be considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Care Staff Shortage: In addition to long-term care staffing, our health care workforce is experiencing unparalleled stress, and shortages are expected across the continuum from direct care workers to medical personnel. Removing barriers to increase supply of workers could include helping find alternate opportunities for nursing students to finish their clinical work if there are gaps at this time, fast tracking reciprocity of licensure for providers from out of state, and ensuring that all staff are practicing to the full extent of their training. Key to this last point is the SAVE Act (HB 185/SB143). Nurse Practitioners and other Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) currently must work under a collaborative agreement with physicians and cannot perform certain functions for which they have been trained. The SAVE Act eliminates outdated regulations that are a barrier to patient access to care from skilled Nurse Practitioners and other APRNs and it eliminates the related health care costs passed down to consumers. Dr. Dennis Taylor (President, NCNA), in his presentation to the Health subcommittee meeting on 4/2/2020, noted that to better address expected health care staff shortages, North Carolina could lift outdated restrictions that prohibit APRNs and nurse practitioners from practicing to the full extent of their training; he noted that 27 other states have already lifted these restrictions. During a pandemic, it is especially important to remove these barriers. APRNs can be critical front line health professionals, approving tests, signing death certificates, etc. Where appropriate, we should also allow nurses to delegate more tasks to paid and trained workers. • Need remote access for families to communicate with their loved ones in licensed facilities (e.g., nursing homes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o We deeply understand the focus on protecting the health and safety of our state's nursing home residents which is paramount. We are, however, very concerned that neither the current state guidance, nor the current guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), truly enable nursing home residents and their families to virtually visit and communicate during this public health emergency. Requiring nursing home residents to go weeks or even months without any visits from loved ones is extremely serious, and the state guidance or legislation should reflect this by requiring nursing homes to prioritize virtual visits and caregiver communications. Such virtual visits can be essential to the emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being of nursing home residents. For some residents, these virtual visits may be the difference between life and death. Funding to make technology (smart phones, iPads, Broadband) available for facilities that are unable to facilitate these communications would serve a dual purpose in also assisting with virtual visits by Ombudsmen and Adult Protective Service representatives. The increased technology for remote access to residents will have the dual benefit of allowing Adult Protective Services to communicate with residents so that pending cases (and new) will not be ignored during this time. • Elder Abuse: Isolation could have unfortunate consequences for elders who are or may be victims of abuse. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, our state needs to step up our

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			<p>efforts to prevent, identify, and address cases of elder abuse. Adult protective services (APS) should continue to investigate or follow up on pending cases, whether they are in the community or in a long-term care setting. Access to virtual or remote visitation as discussed above will be important tools to assist with investigations. Already, counties are struggling to fund APS (federal funds require matching funds) although these services are required by law. State funding for APS has not kept up with the growing aging population, growing number of abuse cases, and knowing that cases are significantly under-reported (The National Academies study estimates only 1 in 14 cases are reported).</p> <p>Thank you for quickly beginning an open process to call for recommendations and hear presentations and discussions in these difficult times as you work to best position our state to deal with this pandemic. AARP appreciates the opportunity to share our concerns on behalf of older North Carolinians.</p>
04/03/2020 03:45 PM	Economic Support Working Group	Mr Toni Pietrantonio	<p>To whom it may concern.</p> <p>I recently contacted my DMV office to obtain an extension or exemption in light of current events for my 2016 Ford F-150 NC safety and emissions which is due 04/30/2020. I was told this could not be done and I should contact my legislators to voice my concerns. In light of what is occurring, the social distancing request and the stay-in-place directive from local and state leaders it would seem counterintuitive to force someone to travel into a public place and have someone sit in their vehicle where you or they could transmit the COVID-19 virus which we know to be very contagious. In short, I am asking that the citizens of NC be provided a reprieve from needing to visit an inspection location and complete inspections until after this situation passes.</p> <p>Kind Regards,</p>
04/03/2020 04:13 PM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Leisa Vincelette	<p>I'm writing to ask you to please allow for extensions on car registration inspections until the crisis with Covid-19 has passed.</p> <p>My entire family is high risk because of different underlying conditions we each have. Because of this, we have worked hard to limit our exposure to the virus as much as possible. We believe that breaking our lockdown to get our cars inspected is too great of an unnecessary risk. We also do not think it is fair or conscionable to ask a friend or neighbor to put themselves and their family at risk to take our cars in for us.</p> <p>It is one thing to ask a friend who is already going to the store to buy food for their family to pick up a few things for us, it's another entirely to ask them to put themselves at risk for something that really can wait until the danger has passed.</p> <p>I urge you to do the right thing to protect not only my family, but all high risk North Carolinians, and do whatever is necessary to expediently issue extensions on car registration inspections.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
04/03/2020 04:35 PM	Health Care Working Group	Mrs. Angie Collins	<p>This is a good time to expand Medicaid. Our infant mortality rate is rising again. You're supposed to be "right to life". Thousands of north Carolinians are uninsured or underinsured. Most households are only one health crisis away from bankruptcy. Is this your vision for NC? Thousands of sick people, unable to work, unable to support</p>

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			<p>themselves.</p> <p>In your cushy lil world you don't have these problems. WE PAY FOR YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE. It's time to actually represent the people of NC, if there's any left after this trump virus. Your party LIED to us. Deceived the whole nation while you took care of yourself.</p>
04/03/2020 04:47 PM	Health Care Working Group	Janice Boone	<p>North Carolina has always been a leader in Healthcare and Public Health. My request is you do everything in your power to get PPE (personal protective equipment) to our brave NC healthcare workers. I worked in Public Health for 32 years and PPE is absolutely necessary to protect our healthcare providers.</p> <p>My son is a physician in the Charlotte area. He is scheduled to work in emergency room, urgent care and hospital during this pandemic. He is from Hayesville, NC, a small town in WNC. He has 4 children who need their Daddy to come home to them, just like all other NC children. Thank you for all you continue to do for NC. I pray you will move mountains to get our healthcare workers and citizens supplies during this terrible pandemic.</p>
04/03/2020 05:27 PM	Health Care Working Group	Alexandra Allman	Expansion of NC Medicaid should include full-time students living in North Carolina who are not dependents of their parents. This should include students with or without income.
04/03/2020 05:28 PM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Ms. Esther Murphy	North Carolinians want to Vote By Mail. Make Elections FAIR
04/03/2020 05:33 PM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Mrs. CATHY VINSKI	<p>I strongly support Mail-In voting! I believe it will greatly expand access for many people in our state.</p> <p>We face the uncertainty of the how long the impacts of COVID-19 will limit the ability of the public to move about freely , however we do know for certain that the 2020 Election Is coming and we must do everything possible to ensure that voting is protected.</p>
04/03/2020 05:48 PM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Chair Cheeks Precinct Ora Kenneth Woods	<p>We should begin to make plans for voting in our November elections.</p> <p>If we are not able to commune in November. Let us plan to VOTE by mail and electronically. Each county can conduct their elections as in the past (only change is we VOTE by mail and electronically) Why by mail and electronically, there are some that can not VOTE electronically. The country will be able to verify their voting eligibility as in the past.</p> <p>We should put this in place, then if needed we will be ready. There are 2 States that are doing some form of this today.</p> <p>Thanks</p>
04/03/2020 06:31 PM	Health Care Working Group	Mrs Karen Taylor	As a retired RN I want health care providers to be able to have PPE. They also deserve appreciation and paid sick leave. Also the public needs to help by staying at home except for essentials like groceries. Practice social distancing. Wash your hands. If you have symptoms check your temperature and self quarantine. The next patient could be you or a family member.
04/03/2020 08:23 PM	Health Care Working Group	Mrs. Jennifer Henley	As a 75 year old woman in good health, I am scared to death. My husband has A-fib which is under control with blood thinners. My son is a phlebotomist at Pardee Hospital in Hendersonville and is drawing blood on covid19 patients. My daughter is a dental

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			hygienist whose office is currently shut down. I fear that the state has not made it clear enough for the public that stay at home actually means STAY AT HOME. There needs to be PSA every hour on TV and radio to emphasize this. Scare the poop out of people so they will comply.
04/03/2020 08:36 PM	Health Care Working Group	Dr. Sandra Burke	If there were ever a time to close the health insurance coverage gap, this period, when our state, and the entire country, is in the grip of the Coronavirus, IT IS CERTAINLY NOW! I'm sure you understand that it is critical to increase access to affordable, accessible health care for those at risk of exposure to COVID-19. Over 1 million North Carolinians do not have health insurance, and at least 400,000 have no options for health care coverage! Those of us who are fortunate enough to have adequate health insurance MUST TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THOSE WHO ARE NOT! In addition, please continue to expand access to and availability of telemedicine services during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that patients can easily access health care expertise while practicing safe social distancing. As a committee charged with helping to reduce the burden of the virus on our communities and healthcare systems, I certainly hope you will pay careful attention to this critical issue!!
04/03/2020 08:48 PM	Economic Support Working Group	Temporary housing Renckens	I think once residents can be tested for COVID and cleared we should set up a coalition of families willing to take in families temporarily that are at risk of homelessness due to the crisis. I would be willing to sponsor a family temporarily if they could be cleared medically at some point.
04/03/2020 10:07 PM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Ms. Susanne Vergara	I support a vote-by-mail system for the Nov. Elections because of COVID-19.
04/04/2020 12:32 AM	Economic Support Working Group	Mrs. Mary Joan Florence	<p>The regular people of North Carolina (and the rest of the country) are hurting. We need targeted prevention and mitigation efforts rather than open-ended one-size-fits-all stay-at-home orders. Many essential industries are still operating, but more industries are completely shut down. Restaurants and bars have been closed by executive order. Service industry employees dependent on tips and gig workers are facing a sudden loss of income. The "non-essential" retail industry is closed, and all their employees are sitting at home. Factories and their employees are idled because there are no retail outlets for their product. The tourism and hospitality industry have no customers because no one can travel. Government loans and grants and unemployment insurance can provide relief for so long when our economy is producing nothing. The potential morbidity and mortality from poverty and despair must be weighed against the potential morbidity and mortality of COVID-19.</p> <p>We must start a targeted reopening of businesses with strict sanitary measures as soon as possible. Cutting lawns has been deemed essential, but not cutting hair for some reason. Hair salons, barbershops, and nail salons already have rules about sanitation. Implement additional emergency sanitation rules such as hand-washing upon entrance, occupancy limits, social distancing between customers, and masks for employees and customers. Do the same with retail stores. Let them install hand-washing stations or rent portable hand-washing stations and install hand sanitizer dispensers throughout their</p>

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			<p>stores and at cash registers. Provide protection for employees who must be close to customers. Let restaurants keep customers 6' apart and require employees to wear masks. When we get these retail and service outlets open again, factory workers, gig workers, and childcare workers will soon be back at work too.</p> <p>It is going to be a tough time. The whole world's economy is shutting down. North Carolina can follow the example of places like Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea and carefully reopen our economy with targeted solutions.</p>
04/04/2020 01:54 AM	Economic Support Working Group	Dr. Frankie Denise Powell	Those essential businesses should have oversight regarding 6 feet distancing, patrons in masks, and quantities of sanitizer. Practices should have oversight and consequences.
04/04/2020 04:29 AM	Health Care Working Group	Ms. Barbara P Wheeler	<p>There is no doubt that at this point in time our healthcare work force are the back bone in this fight against this virus. Everyone from EMTs , CNAs, Nurses, Doctors , right down to the cleaning staff. With that said they are in danger, the shortage of PPE and ventilators is making their jobs even harder and putting them and their patients at risk. We have to do better to protect these fine people who are doing what we cannot do. Personal Protection Equipment was not designed for repeated uses, it is for protection of both patients and healthcare workers. We must make sure they have what they need in the amounts they need across the board from the EMTs to those working in our hospitals and nursing homes.</p> <p>How many plants here in North Carolina have been closed, I'm not talking about the ones who have been closed due to the virus, I'm talking about the ones that have been closed for years and are just standing idle. Why can't they be re-purposed made safe for people to work and used to make the gear we need. It would be an investment in the future of our state, it would give other states a place inside the US to get the gear they need. Stop and think about it depending of the size of the plant part of it could be set up to make the mask, another part for gowns, yet another for gloves and one part for the face shields. The ventilators would of course have to be made in a plant of its own. North Carolina has always been a place where the people have always risen to any challenge that has been thrown at us. I realize that this suggestion is not something that could happen right away, leaving us to find ways to fill the void in the mean time. This virus is unpredictable we have no idea how long it will last or if it will go away, or if it will disappear only to return again. If the later is the case then we need to be ready. I am the proud mother of a CNA every day she goes to work and I worry weather or not she and her coworkers have the PPE they need. Thank-you for your time.</p>
04/04/2020 04:53 AM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Rev Karen Ziegler	We must have voting by mail in the November 2020 election. Other states do it; why can't we? Don't tell me there will be voter fraud. The only voter fraud I know of was by Republicans, and this is the party of voter suppression. If they can only win by cheating and suppressing the vote, they should not be in office. Failure to have voting by mail is transparent voter suppression by the GOP.
04/04/2020 05:20 AM	Health Care Working Group	Ms Amanda Sexton	Expand MEDICAID NOW! You have had years to do this and now we are in crisis. People are literally dying. Do the right thing, expand access to care so that the sick don't lose everything, including their lives.
04/04/2020 06:57 AM	Health Care Working Group	Dr. Amy Dahl	Please expand Medicaid! Rural hospitals have been closing and those that remain are struggling to stay open. They are mandated to care for emergency patients—of which there will now be many more. The Medicaid expansion will pay them for this care.

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			<p>It is a fact of public health that in a pandemic, people who lack access to health care are a danger to all of us. And providing care to all helps all of us.</p> <p>The economic benefits of Medicaid expansion have been demonstrated in state after state. It is now undeniably clear that it would benefit ALL North Carolinians, not only those who would gain access to medical care.</p> <p>In the interest of brevity I will not spell out the details of the following, but merely point out that the two problems of (1) communities that lack hospitals and (2) a large fraction of the state population having untreated chronic health conditions both amplify the spread of the pandemic virus and the prospective overload on those hospitals that remain open.</p> <p>Please accept the Medicaid expansion ASAP!</p>
04/04/2020 07:08 AM	Economic Support Working Group	Dr. Amy Dahl	<p>I urge you to give priority attention to agriculture and the systems by which food is produced and distributed. Currently our local farmers are in a bind: they do not have the legal Mexican labor they normally rely on, and restaurants and other buyers are shut down, so their market has evaporated.</p> <p>Family farms and large chicken and hog operations have different needs and stresses. It is urgent that they receive the support they need both to keep producing this year, and to survive into the future.</p> <p>The whole world is affected by this pandemic. We cannot assume that we can import food to replace what we lose the capacity to produce. Please act now to support and maintain NC agriculture, both small and large scale!</p>
04/04/2020 07:25 AM	Health Care Working Group	Ms Sandra Fleming	<p>Community Mental Health Services continue to fall short on meeting the needs of citizens. Privatizing Mental Health Has Led to less than acceptable out come with questionable staffing and access. During our most fragile time (COVID-19) mental health centers have been replaced with 1-800 numbers. Privation has been plagued with fraud and abuse and do not fit the bill.</p>
04/04/2020 07:38 AM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Nancy Callanan	<p>In light of the current coronavirus-COVID 19 pandemic and all the uncertainty that this presents it is important that NC take steps now to ensure an accessible and fair voter process for the November 2020 elections. I am writing to express support for a comprehensive vote-by-mail system.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
04/04/2020 08:18 AM	Education Working Group		<p>Find a way to ensure all students have access to Internet at home (not in a parking lot!!!)</p>
04/04/2020 08:38 AM	Economic Support Working Group	Ms Kate Green	<p>My concern is for Farmers who need workers to harvest crops. My thought is to have non-violent offenders released to work the fields. In return, they would be released on probation and if they kept probation rules, their records would be expunged. That way they could seek employment without a record.</p>
04/04/2020 10:40 AM	Continuity of State Operations (Emergency Services, Elections & Public Safety) Working Group	Janie Morris	<p>In light of COVID-19 and in order to make it easier for everyone to vote, I highly encourage the NC State Legislature to pass legislation to allow voting by mail for all voters in the 2020 election in North Carolina.</p>
04/04/2020 11:25 AM	Health Care Working Group	Ms. Marcia Everett	<p>The state of North Carolina made a big mistake by not accepting the funds for Medicaid expansion. It's not too late. The ACA can pick up the slack for families now without employment and therefore without healthcare coverage. Some things should be NON</p>

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			PROFIT. Schools, Courts, Police and Fire Departments. It's time we add the medical system of hospitals, nurses, doctors, pharmacists,& medicine to that list. Pass the medicare for All bills in the house and senate.