Buncombe County Legislative Agenda
2026 – 2027 Biennium of the North Carolina General Assembly

Top Priorities

- Support Buncombe County's eligibility for the Supplemental Funds for Teacher Compensation program (PRC 071) by increasing the adjusted market value threshold and annual pay adjustments for classified personnel or, preferably, by identifying a more permanent eligibility solution.
- Increase funding for the NC Innovation Waiver program to address Buncombe County's waiting list which supports adults and children with intellectual or development disabilities.
- Pursue State legislation to facilitate the utilization of surplus State property for economic recovery. The State could restrict use of properties for economic development and/or affordable housing. Sites considered for economic development could be considered for the N.C. Select Sites program administered by the EDPNC.

Policy Priorities

- Additional State funding for mental and behavioral health resources, including services and support for emergency responders, law enforcement personnel, and state employees is needed. The following would improve Buncombe County's ability to deliver services and manage costs more effectively:
    - Any restructuring of the state behavior health system should account for county fiscal and operational impacts and protect community-based crisis capacity including co-responder teams.
    - Increase state-funded inpatient state-funded psychiatric bed capacity including child/adolescent and competency-restoration beds so patients stabilized locally have somewhere to go; and expand the state's non-law-enforcement involuntary-commitment (IVC) transport pilot into western North Carolina.
    - Advocate for comprehensive state-level funding to offset the operational, jail, and mental health burdens as a result of Iryna's Law on county government.
- Seek legislation expanding State programs to help those in need of property tax relief including both the circuit breaker program and property tax exclusion programs for Seniors, Permanently Disabled, and Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities.

- Support modifications to district attorney and public defender allocation models to facilitate additional judicial resources in Buncombe County. Ensure that periodic reviews adequately account for population growth, caseloads, and local demand. Support increases or adjustments to State funding distributions that provide sufficient prosecutorial and district attorney capacity in rapidly growing counties, including Buncombe County.
- Seek legislation to modify the SNAP/FNS payment error rate penalty distribution, included in SB 257, to ensure counties that maintain payment error rates below the 6% federal threshold are not assessed penalties.
- Amend eligibility criteria for the North Carolina Building Reuse Tool and other NC Commerce Tier and census tract driven economic development programs so that opportunities typically reserved for Tier 2 counties might continue to be available to Buncombe County during economic recovery periods.
- Support continued state expansion of NC's healthy opportunity pilot to improve access to housing, food, transportation, and other essential services that address health-related social needs and reduce long-term healthcare costs.

Appropriation Priorities

- Advocate for funding support for public safety, health, and recovery projects which could include the Swannanoa Library, Coxe Avenue and Ferry Road affordable housing developments. Investments in these projects would accelerate recovery following T.S. Helene.
- Seek State funding support for the purchase and installation of storm gauges targeted towards critical waterways to inform fact-based decisions regarding flood mitigation, evacuations, and the deployment of emergency response personnel.
- Seek State funding for the Candler sewer extension project and for residential septic repairs for damage caused by Helene.
- Seek additional State support for Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program administration and management.
- Reimbursement for Local School Consolidation Study Mandated by S.L. 2023-128. The County respectfully requests a reimbursement for $300,000 costs incurred related to the school consolidation study required by the General Assembly in 2023. The County has finalized the study and submitted it to the General Assembly. This request was previously a priority on the 2024 and 2025 legislative agenda.