

# North Carolina's People's Platform for Social and Economic Survival and Beyond



**We are in the midst of a global pandemic, witnessing the devastating consequences of COVID-19 on countries and communities across the world.** This health crisis is exposing, in no uncertain terms, the social, economic, and political crisis that our communities have been bearing for decades and more. Our response to this moment, and the grave injustices that are now amplifying its consequences, offers us the opportunity to move toward a North Carolina where all people can thrive. At this point, it is impossible to extract the crisis caused by COVID-19 from the massive social and economic inequality that laid the groundwork for the disproportionate spread of devastation we can anticipate in our state. Our way forward, therefore, must prioritize solutions that rectify both.

**We've weathered many storms in North Carolina, and know all too well which communities are most likely to be left out of preparation and recovery efforts in times of crisis.** Like many of the natural disasters that have affected North Carolina in recent years, COVID-19 will inevitably hit vulnerable communities the hardest – working and poor people, Black people, people of color, LGBTQ people, disabled people, elderly people, youth and students, parents, migrants and refugees, incarcerated people, the homeless, and women – many of whom are still recovering from Hurricane Michael, Hurricane Florence and Hurricane Dorian. To set our course toward a future that truly leaves no one behind, these are the people we must prioritize now.

**As such, as a broad coalition of directly**

**impacted people, constituencies, and organizations committed to weathering this storm together, we demand:**

- Healthcare is a human right and no person should be denied care and treatment;
- Housing is a human right and no person should be homeless, live in fear of eviction or displacement;
- All of our families matter; parents and caregivers must be supported regardless of family size, citizenship status, gender, ability, and sexual orientation;
- From domestic, city, and healthcare workers to retail and service workers, contractors, and educators: All workers deserve livable wages, benefits, safety, dignity and protection;
- ICE does not keep our communities safe or resolve a broken immigration system; migrants and refugees have the right to live free from fear;
- Prisons and detention centers are not the answer to the challenges facing our society and pose a significant health risk to both incarcerated individuals and workers during this pandemic;
- Democracy must work not just for corporations and the elite few who can pay to have their profit-driven agendas prioritized, but for all of us.

**North Carolina has available dollars – approximately \$1.2 billion in the Rainy Day fund and \$2 billion in unappropriated funds.**

This is the time to use this money for vital services, pass a comprehensive budget, and enact a more equitable and fair revenue structure. The time is now to use this money to mitigate the harm facing North Carolinians during this pandemic.



**We urge our Governor and the North Carolina General Assembly to act as soon as possible on the following demands in accordance with the values we have named above:**

## 1. Expand Medicaid & Protect Our Hospitals

Expand Medicaid without impediments to access such as work requirements. During a public health crisis, it's more important than ever that every North Carolinian has access to care. The State should act immediately to ensure that everyone has access to free and widespread testing, prioritizing the testing of frontline care professionals who work in home and community settings (healthcare professionals, home health aides, cleaning and custodial staff, etc.), without their information being shared with local or federal law enforcement, including ICE, in addition to health insurance and access to mental health care regardless of their pre-existing conditions, immigration status, employment status, or sexuality. North Carolina should also look at emergency appropriations to support our weakened public health infrastructure, particularly investing in rural hospitals.

## 2. Protect Immigrants

North Carolina leaders should instruct Department of Public Safety employees to cease notifying ICE agents of upcoming probation appointments by immigrants; as recently as last week immigrants have been taken into custody with the active participation of DPS employees. Where people are detained in ICE custody, such as the Alamance County Detention Center, ensure all facilities are prioritizing the health and well-being of people detained, including a

provision for quarantining anyone who tests positive for the virus at a hospital, not at a prison or jail.

## 3. Protect Incarcerated People

According to public health experts, incarcerated individuals "are at special risk of infection, given their living situations," and "may also be less able to participate in proactive measures to keep themselves safe;" "infection control is challenging in these settings." North Carolina should use compassionate release to free North Carolinians incarcerated in prisons and jails who are non-violent offenders and are also particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, including people over age 65, people who are pregnant, people with serious illnesses, and those with compromised immune systems. North Carolina should also end cash bail and suspend pretrial confinement since it creates the ideal environment for the transmission of contagious disease. Moreover, North Carolina must provide access to high-quality, comprehensive healthcare services for incarcerated people, including testing for COVID-19; eliminate fees for incarcerated persons to access to medical care; and make all phone calls, video calls, and other communication free and more accessible if visits are temporarily halted.

## 4. Moratorium on All Evictions, Foreclosures, and Utility Shut-offs

Use the power of the Governor's office and state legislature to suspend home evictions and foreclosures statewide until at least December 31, 2020, to ensure that not a single additional North Carolinian is placed at risk without a home during the duration of this pandemic. The moratorium on evictions must be applied to housing in both the public and private sector; with a special emphasis on the role private developers must play in curbing



eviction and displacement rates. During this moratorium, courts must be instructed to not accept any new eviction filings. Utility companies must be directed to enact a moratorium on utility shut-offs for non-payment. Furthermore, we want the state legislature to stop any evictions of unhoused encampments that put people at risk.

## 5. Freedom from Hunger

As workers' hours get cut back and tipped workers wages plummet, hunger will become an even larger problem for poor and working people—especially children. Many low income families depend on free school lunches to help meet children's nutritional needs. While public schools are closed, food distribution centers should be set up in school districts to provide free, nutritious food for anyone who needs it. Food delivery should be available for families in isolation.

## 6. Ensure Paid Sick Days and Family Medical Leave, and Fix our Broken Unemployment System

Ensure job-protected 14 days paid sick leave and three months of family medical leave for all workers, including part-time, seasonal workers, and independent contractors, regardless of the size of their employer or type of job and regardless of immigration status, or longer if required to weather this crisis. Providing paid sick leave and paid family medical leave will give workers the ability to take time off for all COVID-19 related needs for themselves and their loved ones.

Our state's unemployment insurance system is among the very worst in the nation in terms of access rates and benefit levels. Allow eligibility for quarantine and loss hours or cancelled work, for

unemployment insurance, streamline the process for applying, and remove any requirements to seek work in order to access unemployment benefits. Lift the \$350 cap and extend the eligibility timeline to the federal maximum of 26 weeks or longer if required to weather this crisis.

## 7. Put the Health & Welfare of Working Families & Communities Ahead of Corporate Handouts

We call on the NC General Assembly to make it unlawful to discharge or discipline a worker for complying with an order of quarantine or isolation, or for taking the necessary precautions to protect themselves or families against the spread of the virus. The paid leave provisions of the COVID-19 response legislation that recently passed the US House include an exemption for the country's biggest corporations. That means that many working on the frontlines of the service industry in retail, restaurants, fast food -- will not be afforded access to emergency paid sick days or medical leave. We are calling on the NC General Assembly to pass legislation that requires ALL North Carolina employers, including those with over 150 employees to (1) pay employees at least 14 days of paid sick leave, including leave to recover (and/or hazard pay), provide care for a sick family member, or care for children whose daycares and schools have shut down and (2) provide increased safety protections to frontline employees.

## 8. Tax Rich Corporations

What we don't need right now is tax cuts for the rich. North Carolina leaders should raise revenue by increasing the corporate tax to 5%. This would generate an additional \$250 million needed for necessary services and wage replacement.



## 9. Protect our Democracy and Extend the Census

The state should implement contingency measures to ensure North Carolinians can fully participate in this fall's general election. This includes the elimination of restrictions on mail absentee voting, preparation for potential large-scale mail absentee voting, expanded efforts to recruit poll workers, and additional resources for state and county election officials tasked with implementation. In the absence of public events and open government offices, the state should move swiftly to allow voters to register to vote online— a process already provided for in 39 other states and the District of Columbia. State

government should support accommodations to ensure full participation in the Census, and officials should advance long-term efforts to reform our democracy, including rights restoration and automatic voter registration.

## 10. Access to Government

All government entities need to accept remote signatures and attestations, and remote appearances – for court cases, hearings, social service agency government contracts, and more. Elected officials should also make themselves available to the public through digital platforms, including Facebook live and tele-town halls.

*Signers as of 3/19/20 at 10am ET. This list will be updated.*

<b>Action NC</b>	<b>Democracy NC</b>	<b>Lynne Walter, MSW; social worker, community organizer</b>	<b>NC Raise Up</b>	<b>Showing Up For Racial Justice - Triangle Chapter</b>
<b>Advance NC</b>	<b>Down Home North Carolina</b>	<b>Mijente</b>	<b>NC Wins / FLIP NC</b>	<b>Siembra NC</b>
<b>Alliance for Economic Justice</b>	<b>Durham for All</b>	<b>NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina</b>	<b>New Hope Collaborative</b>	<b>Southern Vision Alliance</b>
<b>BeLoved Asheville</b>	<b>El Centro Hispano, Inc</b>	<b>National Domestic Workers Alliance</b>	<b>NextGen NC</b>	<b>Southerners on New Ground</b>
<b>Beloved Community Center of Greensboro</b>	<b>Emancipate NC</b>	<b>NC Asian Americans Together</b>	<b>North Carolina AFL-CIO</b>	<b>Student Action with Farmworkers</b>
<b>Benevolence Farm</b>	<b>Equality NC</b>	<b>NC Black Alliance</b>	<b>North Carolina Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty</b>	<b>Student Health Action Coalition Gender Affirming Care Clinic</b>
<b>Black Workers for Justice</b>	<b>Faith 4 Justice Asheville</b>	<b>NC Climate Justice Collective</b>	<b>North Carolina Council of Churches</b>	<b>Sunrise Movement North Carolina</b>
<b>Blue Dream Curry, Business Owner Asheville</b>	<b>Fayetteville Police Community Taskforce</b>	<b>NC Interfaith Power &amp; Light</b>	<b>Poder NC Action</b>	<b>Tuesdays with Tillis Indivisible .</b>
<b>Bread for the World</b>	<b>Gulford for All</b>	<b>NC Justice Center</b>	<b>Racial Justice Coalition, Asheville</b>	<b>United for a Fair Economy</b>
<b>Carolina Federation</b>	<b>John Dempsey Parker, community organizer</b>	<b>NC Piedmont DSA</b>	<b>Raising Wages NC</b>	<b>United for Respect</b>
<b>Carolina Jews for Justice</b>	<b>Jordan Institute for Families</b>	<b>NC Poor People's Campaign: A National Call For Moral Revival</b>	<b>Safe Coalition NC</b>	<b>Working Films</b>
<b>CIMA-Compañeros Inmigrantes de las Montañas en Acción</b>	<b>Just Economics</b>	<b>NC Public Service Workers Union UE Local 150</b>	<b>Sankofatree</b>	
<b>Democracy Green</b>	<b>Just Florence Recovery Collective</b>		<b>Serena Sebring, community organizer</b>	
	<b>Lead NC</b>			