

Highlights of the Justice and Public Safety Conference Budget

The Conference Budget for Justice and Public Safety in FY 2023-24 includes net appropriations of \$3.6 billion, which is \$229.0 million above the base budget, a 6.7% increase. FY 2024-25 includes net appropriations of \$3.7 billion, which is \$95.2 million more than FY 2023-24, a 2.6% increase. The highlights of the Justice and Public Safety adjustments follow below.

Executive Summary

The Justice and Public Safety budget invests in the judicial system by providing \$10.0 million for eCourts implementation staff, funding 16 new judges, and establishing 8 public defender districts with 134 positions. The Department of Justice receives 15 new Medicaid investigation positions to combat fraud in the Medicaid program. The budget also provides \$8.7 million for operations at Juvenile Justice facilities and \$5.7 million for cyber security. Lastly, the budget directs \$1.0 million to support educational opportunities for offenders and previously incarcerated individuals.

Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)

AOC Committee Report Items

- eCourts technology staff: Provides \$5.0 million in each year of the biennium for time-limited technology positions for implementation of eCourts. (Page E 7, Item 9)
- Judges: Provides \$1.4 million in FY 2023-24 and \$4.1 million in FY 2024-25 for 4 District Court Judges, 2 Superior Court Judges, and 10 Special Superior Court Judges. (Page E 8, Items 18-20)
- Court Personnel: Provides \$953k in FY 2023-24 and \$1.1 million in FY 2024-25 for 6 magistrates, 4 Family Court Coordinators, and 2 Court Management Specialists. (Pages E 8 and 9, Items 15, 17, 21, and 22)

AOC Special Provisions

- Raises mandatory retirement age for appellate judges from 72 to 76 years of age. (Section 16.14)

Indigent Defense Services (IDS)

IDS Committee Report Items

- Public Defender Districts: Provides \$7.5 million in FY 2023-24 and \$15.9 million in FY 2024-25 for 134 positions for 8 new public defender offices in Districts 5 (Duplin, Jones, and Sampson), 7 (Bertie, Halifax, Hertford, and Northampton), 13 (Johnston), 15 (Bladen, Brunswick, and Columbus), 17 (Alamance), 30 (Union), 32 (Alexander and Iredell), and 43 (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain). (Pages E17 and E18, Items 38-45)

Department of Justice (DOJ)

DOJ Committee Report Items

- Medicaid Investigations Division Positions: Provides \$525,000 in each year of the biennium to cover the State's share of 15 positions (8 investigators, 6 attorneys, and 1 paralegal) in the Medicaid Investigations Division. (Page E 25, Item 52)
- State Crime Lab Equipment: Provides \$1.0 million on a recurring basis for ongoing replacement and updating of equipment at the State Crime Lab. (Page E 25, Item 53)

DOJ Special Provisions

- Modifies the Criminal Justice Fellows program by expanding the counties in which graduates can find employment under the program and allowing participants additional time to complete the program in certain circumstances. (Section 18.3)

Department of Public Safety (DPS)

DPS Committee Report Items

- Juvenile Justice Facilities Operating Expenses: Provides \$9.8 million in FY 2023-24 and \$8.7 million in FY 2024-25 to support 86 positions for operations at 3 Juvenile Justice facilities scheduled to open this biennium:. (Pages E37 and 38, Items 69-71)
- State Highway Patrol (SHP): Provides an additional \$1.5 million in both years of the biennium to support operating expenses. (Page E38, Item 74)
- State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) Personnel: Provides \$2.6 million in FY 2023-24 and \$2.3 million in FY 2024-25 and 18 positions to the SBI for various purposes, including specialized investigations into organized retail theft, officer involved shootings, and internet crimes against children, as well as new administrative support for the new department. (Pages E38 and 39, Items 76-78)
- NC Emergency Management (NCEM) Capacity Building Competitive Grant Program (CBCG): Provides \$1.9 million in FY 2023-24 to NCEM for the CBCG, a program which provides grants to local emergency management offices. (Page E39, Item 79)
- NCEM School Safety Programs: Provides \$2.0 million in each year of the biennium and 3 positions to NCEM support operations of several statewide school safety programs, including the State Emergency Response Application, the State Risk Management Portal, and the statewide mobile panic alarm program. (Page E39, Item 80)
- NCEM and NC National Guard (NCNG) Cyber Security Joint Task Force: Provides \$5.7 million in each year of the biennium for 4 positions at NCEM and 30 positions at NCNG to support cyber security protections and response for the State, local government, and critical infrastructure partners. (Page E40, Items 85, 86, and 88)

- State Emergency Response and Disaster Relief Fund (SERDRF): Appropriates \$287.8 million from the SERDRF, of which \$142.8 million is appropriated to State agencies addressing resilience and mitigation projects across the State; the remaining \$145.0 million provides funding for 45 resilience and mitigation projects in targeted counties.

DPS Special Provisions

- Transfers \$150.0 million from the General Fund into the SERDRF, \$75.0 million in FY 2023-24 and \$75.0 million in FY 2024-25. In addition, the budget recoups \$52.8 million from prior disaster appropriations for programs no longer in operation and deposits these funds back into the SERDRF. (Section 2.2.(e) and 5.6.(a))
- Establishes the State Bureau of Investigation as a new independent agency. (Section 19F.4)
- Directs requests for cyber security support services from local governments, State agencies, or critical infrastructure partners be sent to the NCEM 24-Hour Watch for intake and activation. (Section 19I.3)

Department of Adult Correction

DAC Committee Report Items

- Correctional and Probation and Parole Officers Safety Enhancements: Provides \$2.7 million in FY 2023-24 and \$1.5 million in FY 2024-25 to expand the TASER program to Correctional and Probation and Parole Officers. Funding is also provided for oral-based drug testing of offenders. (Page E57, Item 149)
- Offender Education: Provides \$1.0 million in each year of the biennium to increase post-secondary educational opportunities for offenders and previously incarcerated individuals. (Page E57, Item 150)

DAC Special Provisions

- Authorizes the Department to increase compensation paid to inmates who perform work for the BRIDGE program from \$1/day to \$5/day. BRIDGE is a cooperative program between the Department and NC Division of Forest Resources to train and utilize young non-violent inmates in the management of the State's forest resources. (Section 19C.3)