

House Overrides Budget Veto, Senate to Consider Override

The NC House overrode Governor Cooper's veto of the budget on September 11th with a final 55-15 vote. There are a total of 123 House members, but it only takes three-fifths majority of those present in the chamber to override a veto. 53 members did not vote at all. Now the bill veto will go to the Senate for consideration.

After two years in office, the Governor essentially just regained the power of the veto when the last elections eliminated a Republican super majority that consistently overrode any veto he issued. It appears that Governor Cooper is making up for lost time using his veto power to push for some movement on Medicaid expansion. The General Assembly has been using its time to pass "mini budgets" that essentially extract parts of the budget it sent to the Governor to pass as stand-alone bills. That has worked for some of the pieces of the budget such as salary increases for prison staff, teachers, and other State employees. It has not worked for Medicaid expansion. In fact, Cooper vetoed H555 that would have included funding for Medicaid Transformation and authority for the hospital assessment and the premium gross tax. In his veto, the Governor stated, "Healthcare is an area where North Carolina needs us to do more, and to do it comprehensively." As the impasse persists, North Carolina government is operating under a continuing resolution that allows for last year's budget to be used for the current fiscal year.

Legislative Session Drags On

When this long legislative session began back on January 9th, it was hard to tell how it would continue, but many predicted that it would be longer than usual. And that very prediction has come to fruition. There was the usual rush to the crossover deadline and a routine of legislative committee meetings up until the beginning of the summer. At this point, the legislative calendar is meager, and the committee meetings related to health and human services are few and far between. A few bills that were signed into law over the summer are:

- H. 656, Medicaid Changes for Transformation: Covered appeals and adverse determinations for Medicaid beneficiaries

- S. 413, Raise the Age Modifications: Put more detail on the RtA processes that will go into effect on December 1, 2019

There are many more bills that are either lingering in a conference committee or in a legislative committee, and these bills will remain active into the short session in 2020.