

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021**

H

1

HOUSE BILL 749

Short Title: Healthy Students - School Psychs/COVID-19. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Ball, Lambeth, K. Baker, and R. Smith (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

May 3, 2021

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF
3 SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

4 Whereas, social-emotional support provided by school psychologists can enhance
5 students' ability to succeed in school and in the community; and

6 Whereas, as schools return to in-person learning amid the coronavirus disease 2019
7 pandemic, school psychologists are equipped to professionally address the accompanying
8 increased demand for school mental health services; and

9 Whereas, North Carolina has 780 school psychologists serving one million five
10 hundred thousand public school students; and

11 Whereas, North Carolina's ratio of school psychologists to students is currently 1
12 school psychologist for every 1,943 students, and the nationally recommended ratio of school
13 psychologists to students is 1 school psychologist for every 500 students; and

14 Whereas, North Carolina's top State-funded school psychologist salary is \$14,180
15 below the national median salary, making it extraordinarily challenging to recruit and retain
16 school psychologists; and

17 Whereas, it is a top priority of the General Assembly to respond to the increased need
18 for social-emotional support among North Carolina's public school students in these challenging
19 times; Now, therefore,

20 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

21
22 **PART I. COMPENSATION INCREASES FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

23 **SECTION 1.(a)** For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, in addition to the salary provided in
24 accordance with the "A" Teachers Salary Schedule, school psychologists shall receive ten
25 thousand dollars (\$10,000) per year, paid in monthly amounts.

26 **SECTION 1.(b)** For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, school psychologists who have
27 Nationally Certified School Psychologists (NCSP) certification shall receive a salary supplement
28 each month of twelve percent (12%) of their monthly salary on the "A" Teachers Salary Schedule,
29 as modified pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

30 **SECTION 1.(c)** For purposes of this section, the term "school psychologists" shall
31 refer to licensed personnel of the public schools who are classified as school psychologists.

32 **SECTION 1.(d)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
33 Public Instruction for the 2021-2022 fiscal year the sum of fourteen million six hundred
34 sixty-four dollars (\$14,000,664) in recurring funds to provide compensation increases for school
35 psychologists pursuant to this section.



1 SECTION 1.(e) This section becomes effective July 1, 2021.

2
3 **PART II. SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**
4 **PROGRAM**

5 SECTION 2.(a) Article 21 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by
6 adding the following new section to read:

7 "**§ 115C-318.1. School psychologists recruitment and retention program.**

8 (a) Program; Purpose. – The State Board of Education shall establish the School
9 Psychologists Recruitment and Retention Program (Program). The purpose of the Program is to
10 recruit high-quality school psychologists to identified public school units and retain high-quality
11 school psychologists in identified public school units by providing signing and retention bonuses
12 to select school psychologists.

13 (b) Definitions. – For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

14 (1) Identified public school unit. – Any of the following:

15 a. A local school administrative unit.

16 b. A charter school.

17 c. A regional school.

18 d. A school providing elementary or secondary instruction operated by
19 one of the following:

20 1. The State Board of Education, including schools operated
21 under Article 7A and Article 9C of this Chapter.

22 2. The University of North Carolina, including schools operated
23 under Articles 4, 29, and 29A of Chapter 116 of the General
24 Statutes.

25 3. The Department of Health and Human Services.

26 4. The Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice of the
27 Department of Public Safety.

28 (2) Recruitment and retention coordinator. – The person at the Department of
29 Public Instruction, under the direct supervision of the Superintendent of Public
30 Instruction, who is responsible for administering the Program.

31 (c) Implementation. – The recruitment and retention coordinator shall coordinate with
32 identified public school units to allocate any funds appropriated for the Program, subject to the
33 following requirements:

34 (1) Bonuses shall be conditioned on the existence of an agreement between the
35 identified public school units and the school psychologist that is (i) approved
36 by the recruitment and retention coordinator and (ii) at a minimum, includes
37 the following provisions:

38 a. The school psychologist agrees to remain employed in the identified
39 public school unit as a school psychologist for three to five years, as
40 negotiated by the parties.

41 b. The school psychologist agrees to return bonus funds to the
42 Department of Public Instruction on a prorated basis if all of the
43 following criteria are met:

44 1. The school psychologist does not remain employed in the
45 identified public school unit as a school psychologist for the
46 agreed upon period of time.

47 2. The school psychologist has not been terminated due to death,
48 a reduction in force, or disability that prohibits him or her from
49 carrying out the essential functions of the job.

50 (2) No individual bonus shall be greater than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).

1 (3) In determining how to allocate funds for the Program, the recruitment and
2 retention coordinator shall consider the unique factors of each identified
3 public school unit, including all of the following:

4 a. The level of resources available to the identified public school unit that
5 would receive the funds.

6 b. The overall impact on student mental health in the identified public
7 school unit if the funds are provided.

8 c. The history of difficulty in recruiting or retaining school psychologists
9 at the identified public school unit.

10 d. The likelihood of success in recruiting or retaining school
11 psychologists at the identified public school unit without a bonus.

12 (4) The recruitment and retention coordinator shall not provide any funds to an
13 identified public school unit unless the unit agrees that the funds will be used
14 to supplement, and not supplant, local funds for school psychologists.

15 (5) Except as provided in this section, the recruitment and retention coordinator
16 shall have discretion over the allocation of funds.

17 (d) Report. – By September 30, 2021, and every subsequent three months in which funds
18 are awarded, the recruitment and retention coordinator shall report to the President Pro Tempore
19 of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Joint Legislative Education
20 Oversight Committee, and the Fiscal Research Division on the name of the identified public
21 school units receiving funds, the amount of funds received by each identified public school unit,
22 and the purposes for which the funds were used."

23 **SECTION 2.(b)** Appropriation; Administrative Costs. – There is appropriated from
24 the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction for the 2021-2022 fiscal year the sum
25 of six hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$650,000) in recurring funds to establish and implement
26 the Program established by this section. The Department shall use up to one hundred thousand
27 dollars (\$100,000) of these funds to establish one new, full-time equivalent recruitment and
28 retention coordinator position at the Department to administer the Program.

29 **SECTION 2.(c)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2021.

30 31 **PART III. STIPENDS FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNS**

32 **SECTION 3.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
33 Public Instruction for the 2021-2022 fiscal year the sum of four million five hundred twenty-six
34 thousand five hundred fifty dollars (\$4,526,550) in recurring funds to provide monthly stipends
35 to up to 100 school psychology interns, as follows:

36 (1) Stipends shall be equivalent to the monthly salary amounts provided on the
37 first step of the Teachers Salary Schedule for school psychologists.

38 (2) Stipends shall be provided for up to 12 months.

39 (3) School psychology interns shall be selected to receive the stipends pursuant
40 to a process developed by the Department. The process shall require school
41 psychology interns receiving stipends pursuant to this section to meet at least
42 the following criteria:

43 a. Be enrolled in a graduate program that is accredited by the National
44 Association of School Psychologists.

45 b. Agree that the internship will include at least 1,200 hours of field
46 experience on a full-time basis over the course of one academic year.

47 48 **PART IV. EFFECTIVE DATE**

49 **SECTION 4.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes
50 law.