

Governor Cooper's Proposed Budget Plan Announced February 4, 2021

Gov. Roy Cooper outlined a \$4 billion budget plan Thursday to use COVID-19 relief funds for immediate needs and state resources during the coronavirus pandemic.

This plan would be a part of the [bill that passed in the House Thursday](#), according to Cooper's press conference.

"I appreciate the work of legislators to quickly pass vital relief as the state responded to the pandemic last year and I believe we can work together to get the job done again," Gov. Cooper said. "Our communities and people face serious challenges and we must come together to identify areas of common ground and help our people beat the pandemic and thrive once again."

According to Gov. Cooper, federal funds would go toward:

- About \$2 billion for emergency assistance for public and private K-12 schools and higher education institutions
- \$336 million for childcare and development block grants
- About \$700 million for access to vaccines and testing, tracing and prevention measures to slow the spread of the virus
- \$546 million for emergency rental assistance, which will build on North Carolina's current work, such as the HOPE program
- \$258 million for Highway Infrastructure and \$65 million for airports
- \$47 million for Community Mental Health Services
- Funding for food assistance programs, such as SNAP and school nutrition

Cooper said the state's budget remains strong, and he also recommends:

- \$50 million for continued hazard duty pay for state employees on the frontlines of COVID-19, especially law enforcement and corrections personnel
- \$64.5 million for the replenishment of the North Carolina State Health Plan
- \$468 million for bonuses for educators and school personnel in public K-12 schools, community colleges and the university system
- \$30 million to extend high-speed internet to all corners of the state and other urgent connectivity initiatives, such as IT infrastructure, security for community colleges and enhancement of 35,000 hotspots used for education
- \$37 million to support small businesses that have suffered during the pandemic and often don't have large cash reserves, including small business counseling, marketing for tourism and hospitality, ReTOOLNC program for historically underutilized businesses (HUBs), and the business loan program at Golden L.E.A.F.
- Expansion of state unemployment benefits, which are still among the lowest in the country (North Carolina's Unemployment Trust Fund remains healthy, with a balance of more than \$2.59 billion. North Carolina should increase the maximum duration of benefits to 26 weeks and increase the maximum benefit from \$350 to \$500 per week.)