

## Brooks Pierce Capital Dispatch: Updates from the NC General Assembly and Governor's Office, March 12, 2021

03.12.2021

This week, work at the General Assembly included school reopening and the state budget.

### **COVID-19 Response and Relief Bill and new Federal funds**

Gov. Roy Cooper signed a bill (H 196(link is external)) appropriating \$1.7 billion in federal COVID-19 funds for various purposes this week. Among other things, the bill allocates over \$100 million to K-12 public school needs, provides \$290 million for higher education emergency relief and \$40 million to support summer learning programs. It is in addition to a bill (S 36(link is external)) enacted earlier in the session that allocates nearly \$2 billion in federal COVID-19 funds, including \$1.6 billion to help local school districts safely reopen and \$546 million for emergency rent relief.

With the enactment this week in Washington of H.R.1319 - American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, North Carolina expects to receive significant additional federal funds in the coming weeks. Press reports indicate that North Carolina's share of this funding could include nearly \$9 billion. This would include \$5.2 billion for state government, \$672 million for larger cities, \$682 million for municipalities, \$2 billion for county governments, and \$277 million for capital projects. This bill also appropriates over \$7.1 billion to help schools and libraries with broadband internet to facilitate student remote learning across the nation.

### **Opening of K-12 Schools**

Gov. Cooper and Legislative leaders agreed on a plan to reopen K-12 schools. Under the bill (S 220), kindergarten through fifth grades will open in Plan A as defined by the latest 2021 NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12). Local districts will have the flexibility to decide between opening under Plan A, Plan B, or a combination of the two for grades 6-12. Families can choose to continue virtual learning for their students.

The bill's requirements are effective 21 days after it becomes law. School districts, however, are authorized to move to Plan A or Plan B immediately if ready. The Governor will have the authority to order a closure, restriction, or reduction of operations within schools, but can only do so on a district-by-district basis.

### **Remote Shareholder Meetings**

The Senate passed a bill (S 138) this week that allows shareholder meetings by “remote communication” in certain circumstances. The provisions would apply to such meetings on or after the effective date of the bill. Gov. Cooper has issued Executive Order 198 that allows such meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **State Budget**

Appropriations Committees continued meeting jointly this week to discuss the state's budget process, existing agency budgets and receive updates from agencies. These joint committee meetings will run through late March and then the Senate appropriators will begin meeting separately to draft a budget bill as that chamber considers the budget first this year. Press reports indicate that Gov. Cooper may present his budget recommendations during the week of March 22.

### **Internet Broadband**

Given the importance of remote learning during the pandemic and that broadband internet service can spur job creation, Gov. Cooper and Legislators are considering a number of proposals on this topic. Part of the federal COVID-19 relief money has been designated for these purposes (for example, H 196 recently added \$6 million to the GREAT program, which seeks to spur broadband buildout in underserved and unserved areas) and many expect this year's budget bill to provide additional funds for broadband service. One such bill introduced this week is H 289. It provides \$1 million to the Department of Information Technology for the preparation of statewide broadband maps and designates the Department as the sole source of this mapping for state agencies.

For more information, contact a member of the Brooks Pierce Government Affairs Team.

### **PEOPLE**

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### **SERVICES**

COVID-19 Response Resources

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