

President's Report
NC Pre-K Committee & Board of Directors Meeting
Charles Morris Conference Room
Thursday, August 27, 2026

A. NCPC/DCDEE Updates / Legislative Updates

1. NCPC

- This month's special stories focus on **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)**.
- The **Smart Start RFP Allocation Bidder's Meeting for the next 3-year cycle is scheduled for September 15th**. Applications are due November 17th. The review process will begin in January 2027. Board and committee members are encouraged to consider participating as reviewers.
- NCPC received funding in the FY27 budget for Mental and Behavioral Health Services, Pilots for Child Care Work Force Academies, and DPIL. The Smart Start Network Legislative Tracking Report for the 2026 Session is attached.
- DPIL – There is no longer a waiting list and the NCPC system is open to take applications. We currently are serving **8,542** children in conjunction with the United Way of Cumberland County with 175 in processing (100 additional overnight).
- On August 25, news of Dolly Parton's death was announced by her family. Her legacy will continue in North Carolina with each book that is delivered to the homes of children right here in Cumberland County and all over the state. Since 2008, the program has served over 50,000 children in Cumberland County. *The family has requested donations in her memory be directed to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, providing links to all of the local partners.*

2. DCDEE

- **Child Care Resources Inc. announced awards for the territories listed in the RFA for Child Care Resource and Referral Services for the South-Central Region.** PFC was awarded the grant for Greater Cumberland (Cumberland and Hoke), Sandhills (Anson, Montgomery, & Richmond), and Lumber River (Robeson, Bladen, & Scotland). Contracting is in process, initial training has occurred on the database Upfront, and Julanda Jett is coordinating initial visits with staff to all counties covered in our proposal.
- **NC Pre-K**
 - The contract from DCDEE for NC Pre-K for the new fiscal was executed July 28.
 - Contract preparation for providers is in process, with most providers in contract. This is the third year of a 3 year-contract cycle.
 - **NC Pre-K Let's Get Enrolled – Applications for the 2026-2027 school year continue to be processed.** Please share the URL: **LetsGetEnrolled.com**. Contact Ar-Nita Davis (adavis@ccpfc.org) with any questions.
 - The Site Selection Committee is gearing up for reviewing applications for the next 3-year cycle.

3. State and Federal Level – Lawmakers in Washington and Raleigh are on vacation or campaigning this month.

- The State budget has been certified. Funding is now flowing to Departments so that contracts can be developed for any new funding.
- For additional updates, refer to the NC Center for Nonprofits' [August 21 Public Policy update](#).

4. Local Level

- FTCC approached the Programs Department to collaborate with their Lead Teacher Academy Pilot. The Academy started this week. Sylvia Murphy & Mary Anders are providing the training.

- The Cumberland County Literacy Council celebrated its 1st Year Anniversary this week. The Literacy Council is a collaborated effort spearheaded by the United Way of Cumberland County. Julanda Jett is PFC's representative on the Literacy Council.
- Cape Fear Valley Health is submitting a Blue Cross/Blue Shield grant focused on Partnerships Supporting Parent and Caregiver Well-Being. PFC provided a support letter to participate in the Southeastern Family Wellness Collaborative should Cape Fear Valley Health be awarded the grant. This initiative aligns with family engagement across multiple programmatic areas at PFC.

B. Grant Opportunities/Updates/RFPs

- PFC staff met with the iParametrics, the consultants for the City of Fayetteville's ARPA grant, on August 25 for an audit and review of progress on the two activities funded (**Family Connects and Workforce Development Program**). All funding must be expended by December 31, 2026.
- **Cumberland County Government awarded PFC \$218,700 for a Community Grant** focused on Family Connects and Early Childhood Work Force Development. The contract has been executed.

C. Building Sustainability and Organizational Sustainability & Succession Planning

- Representatives for the **Building Sustainability Work Group**: Met on August 12 to review options to bring to the August Board Meeting. A motion is being presented to the Board for next steps.
- **Organizational Sustainability & Succession Planning**: Mary Sonnenberg met with Jessica Lowery-Clark from Robeson County on August 2 to review the summaries (Non-negotiables & SWOT) and prepare presentations to each respective Board of Directors. Upon review of the documents and discussion, it was agreed to present to both Boards a recommendation to continue investigation with outside facilitation and legal counsel to gain additional information, have additional advice on due diligence, and to come up with viable plan options.

D. Staff Updates

- Teams are evaluating and interviewing candidates for the NC Pre-K Program Specialist and the Early Literacy & Play Coordinator positions. We are not currently accepting new applications for these vacancies.
- With the award of the South-Central Region CCR&R territories contract, we will be recruiting some additional coach positions. The job descriptions updates have not been finalized and these postings are not currently live. We anticipate having the positions posted the week of August 31.

E. Events/Recognitions

- **Kindness Awards – September 2026**. Nominations have closed. Award presentations to honorees will be during the week of September 21. We need Board members to assist with award presentations. If you haven't volunteered yet, email Tamiko Colvin, Community Engagement & Partnership Specialist at tcolvin@ccpfc.org. Kindness Awards are done in conjunction with Smart Start Month in September.
- **Little Land on the Farm 2026 at the County Fair – Save the dates September 4 – 13, 2026**. Let us know if you can volunteer. **The Ribbon Cutting ceremony at the Expo Center will be Friday, September 4 at 4:30 pm**. We welcome Board members to attend the Ribbon Cutting ceremony with staff.
- **Chuy's Friends and Family Days will be September 25-26**. We have been chosen as the proceeds recipient for the launch of their restaurant which is at the site of the former Bahama Breeze location. More information to follow.
- **Grilled Cheese Festival – Save the date for Saturday, November 7, 2026**. Consider sponsorship, table sponsorship, vendor, and volunteer opportunities. Contact dmalvesti@ccpfc.org. **Presale tickets are on sale at <https://ccpfc.org/cheesy/>**.
- Students in the Parents for Higher Education (PFHE) at FTCC will host a book drive on campus during National Book Month in October to collect new and gently used children's books for PFC. Dates for the book drive are **October 1-31**.
- **Boo-Levard Office Trick or Treat October 29 from 5:00-7:00 pm. Hotdog plate sale 11:30-1:30 and 5-7. Things you can do: Donate bags of candy or prepackaged snacks, purchase a plate for lunch, and/or join us with the families. We already have 25 registrations with 40 plus children planning to come!**
- **Little Land 2027 – Save the date for Saturday, March 13, 2027, 10:00 am-2:00 pm, Crown Expo Center.**

Special Story: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) – United Way of Cumberland County

One year ago, United Way of Cumberland County set out with a simple but ambitious vision: introduce every newborn in Cumberland County to the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library before leaving the hospital. Today, that vision has become a reality.

In the last quarter of Fiscal Year 25-26, representatives from The Dollywood Foundation visited Cumberland County to recognize Cape Fear Valley Health and Womack Army Medical Center for their leadership in creating a hospital partnership that has become a model for expanding early childhood literacy. At nearly the same time, North Carolina announced plans to begin opening Smart Start registrations to families on the waiting list, allowing even more children to begin receiving books during their earliest years. Together, these milestones affirmed that the work accomplished over the past year is creating lasting opportunities for families throughout our community.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful outcomes has been watching community members embrace the mission of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Local children's author and Literacy Ambassador Tashonda "Shon" McCormick has become a passionate advocate for early literacy by volunteering at DPIL Storytimes, encouraging parents to read with their children, and creating engaging educational content through Shon's Stories. Her enthusiasm reflects how the program is inspiring others to invest their own time and talents in helping children discover the joy of books.

The importance of this work is reinforced by recent international research involving more than 86,000 families across five countries. The study found that children participating in the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library are read to more frequently, demonstrate stronger emerging literacy skills, and experience richer home literacy environments than children who are not enrolled.

Looking back over the past year, the greatest accomplishment has not been the recognition received, the sponsorships secured, or even the number of books distributed. It has been watching a shared vision unite hospitals, educators, businesses, volunteers, community leaders, and families around one simple belief: every child deserves the opportunity to fall in love with reading.

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has always been about more than delivering books. It is about delivering possibility. Every book placed into a child's hands is an invitation for a parent or caregiver to pause, read together, ask questions, laugh, imagine, and create memories that may last a lifetime. Those quiet moments, repeated night after night in homes across Cumberland County, are where the true impact of this program begins.

As United Way of Cumberland County reflects on the first full year of being a Direct Service Provider, we are grateful to Partnership for Children of Cumberland County, The Dollywood Foundation, our hospital partners, community sponsors, volunteers, and the many families who have embraced the program. Together, we are doing far more than building home libraries—we are helping build stronger families, kindergarten readiness, and a culture where reading is valued from the very beginning of a child's life.

*The announcement of Dolly Parton's death on August 25 by her family has impacted people in ways we could not have imagined...not just in our country but all over the world. In the end the "Book Lady's" legacy will continue every time a child receives a book in the mail. Her music made her an icon. The way she lived made her a role model and gave us hope. Her commitment to children and families of all ages will continue to have a lasting impact for generations to come. The Partnership for Children of Cumberland County is honored to help continue her legacy alongside the United Way of Cumberland County.



Smart Start

**Smart Start Network Legislation Tracking Report
2026 Legislative Session**

2026 NC Appropriations Act

Citations and Title	Synopsis	Funding
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Budget Fund: 132101 9D.7 (Budget Bill)	Provides funds to support the statewide administration of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Includes a reporting requirement. The revised net appropriation for this program is \$13.0 million in FY 2026-27 total	\$1 million, recurring for FY 2026-27 \$5 million, nonrecurring for FY 2026-27 Amount above is in addition to \$7 million recurring for total of \$13 million for 2026-27 \$6 million, nonrecurring and \$1 million, recurring in 2026 Appropriations Bill; \$6 million, recurring later decreased by \$1 million, nonrecurring in 2026 Budget Technical Corrections Bill. See Section 3.6 in Technical Corrections Bill- SL 2026-42



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		, - Adjust funding/Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Behavioral Health Services Budget Fund: 134000 (Committee Report) Section 9D.9 (Budget Bill)	Provides funds for Smart Start Local Partnerships to expand mental and behavioral health services for children, families, and staff in child care facility settings and out-of-school programs. NCPC shall spend the funds in the following budget codes: PSC 5415 Health Care Access and Support PSC 5505 Parent Education PSC 3125 Quality Child Care PSC 5509 Parents as Teachers NCPC to distribute funds to Smart Start Local Partnerships, as determined by NCPC. Funds do not revert and remain available until expended. Includes reporting requirement.	\$7.3 million, nonrecurring for FY 2026-27
Child Care Workforce Pilot Program Budget Fund: 131207 Section 9D.8 (Budget Bill)	Provides funds for Smart Start Local Partnerships to develop and operate child care workforce academies in Johnston and Wayne counties as well as ten other local partnerships to be determined in collaboration with the NCPC and North Carolina Community Colleges System Office. Includes reporting requirements. SECTION 9D.8.(l)	\$1.5 million, nonrecurring Funds do not revert at end of fiscal year and shall remain available for use



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	DCDEE required to establish a Provisional Early Childhood Credential for individuals who are 16 or 17 years of age and preparing to work in licensed child care programs in this State. SECTION 9D.8.(m) Applicable to individuals under SECTION 9D.8.(l) Community College System, DPI, NC CAP, and DCDEE shall collaborate to create pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship pathways aligned with the Provisional Early Childhood Credential with this credential enabling those individuals to work in any out-of-school and summer programs. SECTION 9D.8.(n) Step progression from Provisional Early Childhood Credential to full North Carolina Early Childhood Credential to employment as a lead teacher.	
Bidding Provision Section 9D.6(e) (Budget Bill)	Bidding Thresholds changed below. SECTION 9D.6.(e) Bidding. – NCPC and all local partnerships shall use competitive bidding practices in contracting for goods and services on contract amounts as follows: (1) For amounts of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) or less, the procedures specified by a written policy as developed by the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (2) For amounts greater than fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) but less than twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000), three written quotes. (3) For amounts of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) or more but less than forty thousand dollars (\$40,000), a request for proposal process with solicitation in appropriate venues, including, but not limited to, websites,	



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	major newspaper portals, or other options to ensure a strong competitive process. (4) For amounts of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) or more, a request for proposal process and advertising in a major newspaper.	
CCDF - Subsidy Reimbursement Rates Budget Fund: 133600 Section 9D.4 (Budget Bill)	Budgets receipts from the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant to increase the reimbursement rates for providers of subsidized child care services based on the NC Child Care Market Rate Study 2023 Final Report, implement a statewide rate floor based on the NC Child Care Market Rate Study 2021 Final Report, and to decrease waitlists. Provisions become effective October 1, 2026, not July 1, 2026, according to change in technical corrections bill, HB 56, Section 3.2	\$97 million, recurring for FY 2026-27 These are federal funds. Total revised requirements for the Child Care Subsidy program are \$593.1 million in FY 2026-27.
CCDF - Quality and Availability Initiatives Budget Fund: 131203	Adjusts funds from the federal CCDF block grant for quality and availability initiatives. New initiatives include an approved Early Education Information System project and a Family Child Care Home Direct Support pilot program to help increase the supply of family child care homes in NC.	\$5.8 million, recurring Total CCDF block grant funding for quality and availability initiatives is \$67.8 million in FY 2026-27.



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Use of Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds/Family Child Care Home Direct Support Pilot Section 9M.2.(a) (Budget Bill)	Family Child Care Home Direct Support Funds allocated in equal amounts to three councils of governments: one of which is in a county from the Coastal Plain Region, the Mountain Region, and the Piedmont Region, as those regions are defined in G.S. 143B-1373(a) to establish a two-year pilot program coordinated by those councils of governments to build child care capacity in those counties. Each designated council of government shall issue a request for application (RFA) for a vendor to administer the pilot program, and each vendor selected shall have experience providing support and assistance to early child care providers. Includes reporting requirements for Council of Governments participating in the program.	\$3.25 million, nonrecurring for FY 2026-27 (funds from CCDF Quality and Availability Initiative Above under CCDF - Quality and Availability Initiatives Budget Fund: 131203)
Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) Budget Fund: 132105	Provides funds for Triple P for assistance to parents with child rearing. The revised total requirements for this program are \$3.3 million in FY 2026-27.	\$200,000 nonrecurring for FY 2026-27
Eliminate General Fund Appropriation to the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Budget Fund: 132105	Eliminates the recurring funding for NFP, which is a nonprofit that provides in-home services to first time mothers. These funds will be re-allocated to Local Health Departments under Division of Public Health for activities authorized under the General-Aid-to-Counties Agreement Addendum	
Department of Public Health (DPH): Report on Recommendations for a Plan to improve maternal	April 1, 2027, report by DPH to state legislature on recommendations for a plan to establish maternal levels of care and to update neonatal levels of care to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates within NC.	



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and infant levels of care in NC	DPH must consult with maternal and infant health stakeholders on recommendations.	
SECTION 9H.2. (Budget Bill)		
<i>NC Department of Insurance:</i> Childcare Providers Insurance Study Budget Fund: 101601	Provides funds to study insurance coverage options for North Carolina child care providers. Includes a reporting requirement due May 1, 2027, from NC Department of Insurance to NC General Assembly	\$350,000 Nonrecurring for FY 2026-27
Section 32.2 (Budget Bill)		
Medicaid	\$1 billion allocation towards funding Medicaid, including \$847 million for Medicaid rebase.	Includes Medicaid Rebase - \$847.2 Million
Medicaid Rebase Adjusts Medicaid funding for projected changes in enrollment	Provides funds to investigate Medicaid waste and abuse and a reporting requirement.	
Medicaid Waste and Abuse Budget Fund: 100701		
Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP)	HOP was suspended last summer due to lack of funding. This program connects rural Medicaid enrollees to community resources that address non-medical needs, including access to food, housing, and transportation.	\$25 million, nonrecurring for FY 2026-27



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SNAP Administrative Cost Funding Offset Budget Fund: 133508	Provides funds to offset the loss of federal receipts due to changes to the administrative cost-sharing requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) resulting from Public Law 119-21 (H.R. 1). Also provides funds for new staff that will provide assistance to SNAP to provide on-site support for the implementation of operational improvements in an effort to reduce the State's SNAP payment error rate (PER) in response to program changes under H.R. 1.	Since the actual SNAP benefit is federally funded, there is not one single line item. Monies appropriated in different line items under NC Department of Health and Human for system updates, staff, and error rate reduction.
2026 Legislation (to include bills still pending)		
Bill Number and Title	Synopsis	Bill Sponsor(s)
Session Law 2026-1 Conference Report Medicaid & HHS Adjustments/Other Critical Needs	Appropriates \$319 million, nonrecurring for 2025-2026 to address the Medicaid shortfall as requested by Governor Stein and DHHS. Medicaid funded for remainder of FY 2025-26 Directs Division of Health Benefits to develop a plan for improved health outcomes, program integrity, cost-savings, and efficiency measures in the Medicaid program and an annual accounting report of all improper Medicaid payments and expenditures to the state legislature.	Potts, Reeder, Campell



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	Requires DHHS to refer any applicant or recipient for which citizenship or satisfactory immigration status could not be verified to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Requires the Office of the State Auditor (Auditor) to conduct a performance audit of the administration of the North Carolina Medicaid program Establishes the NC Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education with members to be appointed by the Governor, House Speaker, and Senate President Pro Temp. The Commission will study the NC 's infrastructure and implementation of public education. Appropriates funds to the UNC Board of Governors (BOG) to be allocated to the State Education Assistance Authority (Authority) for recipients of scholarships for the children of wartime veterans and provides funding for several other state agencies.	
Session Law 2026-19 (S 153 NC Border Protection Act Section 5.9 of NC 2026 Appropriations Act addresses applicable Veto Override Technical Corrections	An act to protect the borders of the State by (i) requiring cooperation with federal immigration officials, (ii) ensuring state funds are being used for the benefit of persons in the state legally, (iii) creating additional incentives for local governments to comply with state laws related to immigration, and (iv) prohibiting unc constituent institutions from becoming sanctuary universities. DHHS shall develop and implement a plan to review and update the eligibility criteria for all State-funded benefits to ensure that noncitizens determined to be residing in the United States without legal permission are ineligible to receive State-funded benefits.	Berger, Daniel, B. Newton



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"State-funded benefits" includes any of the following programs administered by or through a contract with the DHHS but excludes any benefits or services available under these programs to help eligible beneficiaries access food or meals:

- (1) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Work First).
- (2) Early Intervention Services.
- (3) Rental or housing assistance programs.
- (4) Medication assistance programs.
- (5) **Child care subsidy programs.**
- (6) Foster care and adoption assistance payments.
- (7) Refugee assistance programs.
- (8) Low Income Energy Assistance.
- (9) Work First Cash Assistance and other employment and self-sufficiency training and services.
- (10) Medicaid.
- (11) Single-stream funding.
- (12) Inpatient psychiatric hospital services (3-Way Bed Contracts).
- (13) The State-County Special Assistance program.
- (14) Programs funded by the Home and Community Care Block Grant.
- (15) Caregiver Support programs.

NCPC and network tracking since state-funded benefits include child care subsidy.



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H171 Equality in State Agencies/Prohibition on DEI	An act eliminating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in state and local government and clarifying the penalty provisions of the state budget act and local government budget and fiscal control act. There was a veto override in the House, but still pending in the Senate. Section 5.9 of the 2026 Appropriations Act includes a special provision on veto override technical corrections applicable to House Bill 171. NCPC and network tracking since Smart Start receives a substantial amount of state funding.	B. Jones, N. Jackson, Lowery, Eddins
H368 Revise Child Passenger Restraint Systems Law or Child Safety Seats	The Child Safety Seats Bill, House Bill 368, may mean North Carolina could soon have new child motor vehicle passenger safety rules that put more emphasis on the height of a child than on their weight. The bill passed the House and is currently in the Senate Rules and Operations Committee. Currently, in Senate Rules and Operations Committee,	Loftis, Penny, Ross, Scott
H1200 Tax Free Families Essentials Day	The proposed legislation will repeal sales taxes on baby wipes, diapers, feminine, and other hygiene products. Currently, in Senate Rules and Operations Committee.	Schietzett, Rhyne, Campbell, Chesser
2026-40 Public Workforce Modernization Act	2026-40 Modernize and simplify the state human resources system.	Corbin, Johnson, Lee,



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	Includes expanding paid parental leave policies for state, public school, and community college employees to 12 weeks for full-time workers and gives a prorated amount to part-time workers. Previously, state employees giving birth received eight weeks of parental leave	
SL 2026-42 2026 Budget Technical Corrections	Makes technical corrections to the 2026 state budget. See Section 3.2., adjust implementation date for child care rate changes and Section 3.6., adjust funding for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for FY 2026-27.	