

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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PRINCIPAL CLERK

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SENATE BILL DRS15243-NIa-77A

Short Title: Tier One County Assistance. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Smith (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO TIER ONE COUNTIES.
3 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

4 **SECTION 1.(a)** Short Title. – This act may be cited as the "Economic Empowerment
5 for Tier One Counties Act."

6 **SECTION 1.(b)** Findings and Purpose. – It is the intent of the General Assembly by
7 this act to do the following:

- 8 (1) Recognize the unique economic challenges faced by Tier One counties in
9 North Carolina.
10 (2) Acknowledge the importance of self-reliance and local empowerment in
11 fostering economic development.
12 (3) Empower Tier One counties by allocating funds to support locally driven
13 economies.

14 **SECTION 1.(c)** Funding. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
15 Department of Commerce (Department) the sum of four hundred million dollars (\$400,000,000)
16 in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to be used for purposes consistent with this
17 act. The funds appropriated pursuant to this act shall not revert at the end of the 2025-2026 fiscal
18 year but shall remain available for expenditure for purposes consistent with this act until all funds
19 have been expended.

20 **SECTION 1.(d)** Use of Funds. – Funds appropriated to the Department by this act
21 shall be used to provide grants to development tier one areas, as defined in G.S. 143B-437.08,
22 for projects and initiatives that promote (i) self-sufficiency, (ii) infrastructure improvement, (iii)
23 education, or (iv) workforce development. The Department may use up to one percent (1%) of
24 the funds appropriated in this act for administration of the program and shall establish guidelines
25 for providing for administration of the program. Those guidelines shall include, at a minimum,
26 the following provisions, which shall apply to each grant from the program:

- 27 (1) Only those counties that are designated as "development tier one areas"
28 pursuant to G.S. 143B-437.08 during the year in which funding is disbursed
29 are eligible to receive grant funding under this act.
30 (2) A county may receive up to ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in grant funding
31 under this act.
32 (3) A county seeking funding under this act shall submit a proposal to the
33 Department detailing the intended use of the funds they are requesting. The
34 proposal shall include, at a minimum, evidence that the funding will be used
35 for the promotion of (i) self-sufficiency, (ii) infrastructure improvement, (iii)
36 education, or (iv) workforce development.



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- (4) The proposal required pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection shall be reviewed and approved by the Department before grant funding is disbursed. The Department may issue grant funding under this act only to those applicants that the Department believes have sufficiently demonstrated that the indicated use of funds by the applicant county will achieve the purposes for which this grant program was established.

SECTION 1.(e) Clawback. – If a county receives a grant under this act for which it is ineligible, the county forfeits the grant awarded under this act and is liable for the amounts received.

SECTION 1.(f) Reporting. – On or before December 1, 2025, and at least annually thereafter until all grant funding appropriated and disbursed pursuant to this act has been exhausted, the Department shall submit a report to the chairs of the Joint Legislative Economic Development and Global Engagement Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division detailing, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) The total amount of grant funding disbursed pursuant to this act.
- (2) The total number of counties who applied for funding.
- (3) The indicated uses for funding that counties included in the proposals required pursuant to this act.
- (4) The actual uses of the funding received by the counties under this act.

On or before October 1, 2025, and at least annually thereafter until all grant funding received by the county has been exhausted and for which a report has been submitted, every county receiving grant funding under this act shall submit a report to the Department detailing, at a minimum, the following: (i) the uses to which the county put its grant funding, (ii) the total balance of unspent grant funding remaining, and (iii) any other information that the Department deems necessary to comply with its reporting obligation under this subsection.

SECTION 2. If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this act that can be given effect without the invalid provisions or application and, to this end, the provisions of this act are severable.

SECTION 3. This act is effective when it becomes law.