

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

H.B. 919
Apr 25, 2017
HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

H

D

HOUSE BILL DRH30407-LGa-47B (03/07)

Short Title: Pembroke Optometry School Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Brenden Jones.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR A SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY AT THE
3 UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT PEMBROKE.

4 Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke serves as the anchor
5 institution for economic development for the southeastern region of North Carolina; and

6 Whereas, an already economically depressed rural area, southeastern North Carolina
7 was recently ravaged by Hurricane Matthew and its record-breaking rainfall, during which the
8 1,000-year flood event devastated people, infrastructure, businesses, schools, and entire
9 communities; and

10 Whereas, Robeson County ranks 100 out of 100 North Carolina counties for overall
11 health outcomes, the median household income is less than \$30,000, 96% of school-age
12 children receive free or reduced lunch, and 44% of children live in poverty; and

13 Whereas, a School of Optometry located at the University of North Carolina at
14 Pembroke would be an economic driver for this region of the State; and

15 Whereas, North Carolina does not have an optometry school and has historically
16 provided support to North Carolina optometry students who are trained out of state; and

17 Whereas, the need for and utilization of optometry services has increased and will
18 continue to do so, not only as the general population ages, but also as the population of the
19 State of North Carolina continues to grow at an increasing rate. Furthermore, federal and State
20 programs requiring assessment and intervention for early childhood eye and vision health will
21 place a greater need on the current State optometry profession; and

22 Whereas, most optometrists are concentrated in more urban areas of the State, thus a
23 school in a rural setting can prepare students to meet both the urban and rural practice need;
24 and

25 Whereas, a School of Optometry at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke
26 would make optometric services more widely available to many low-income and elderly
27 citizens in the University's immediate service area who currently do not have access to such
28 services; and

29 Whereas, the optometry workforce does not reflect the racial diversity of North
30 Carolina's population; and

31 Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke is "North Carolina's
32 Historically American Indian University" and has been identified by U.S. News and World
33 Report as the most diverse regional university in the South; and

34 Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke has strong rural and other
35 health care initiatives in place through programs in nursing, social work, counseling, health
36 administration, and athletic training; and



* D R H 3 0 4 0 7 - L G A - 4 7 B *

1 Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke is located in close
2 proximity to numerous health care systems as well as the Fort Bragg military installation, thus
3 students at a University of North Carolina at Pembroke School of Optometry would enjoy
4 abundant clinical opportunities; Now, therefore,

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of
7 Governors of The University of North Carolina the sum of three million eight hundred
8 seventy-five thousand dollars (\$3,875,000) for the 2017-2018 fiscal year for advance planning,
9 design fees, and other preconstruction activities associated with the construction of a facility to
10 house the School of Optometry at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

11 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2017.