

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025**

S

1

SENATE BILL 524

Short Title: Community Safety Partnership Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Theodros and Bradley (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 26, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY BY INCENTIVIZING COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION IN NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS AND PROVIDING A
STATE-MANDATED BONUS FOR POLICE OFFICERS ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES.

Whereas, public safety is a fundamental priority for the State of North Carolina; and
Whereas, increased community involvement in neighborhood watch programs has
been shown to reduce crime and improve trust between law enforcement and the communities
they serve; and

Whereas, supporting law enforcement officers in their engagement with local
communities will promote safer, stronger, and more connected neighborhoods; and

Whereas, Article I, Section 3, and Article VII, Section 1 of the North Carolina
Constitution authorize the General Assembly to regulate public safety measures; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) Chapter 17F of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:

"Chapter 17F.

"Law Enforcement.

"Article 1.

"General Provisions.

"§ 17F-1. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-2. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-3. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-4. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"Article 2.

"Liability Provisions.

"§ 17F-5. **Defense of Highway Patrol members and other State law-enforcement officers in
civil actions; payment of judgments.**

...

"Article 3.

"Early Warning System.

"§ 17F-10. **Development of law enforcement early warning system.**

...

"Article 4.

"Community Safety Partnership Act.

"§ 17F-11. Short title.

This Article shall be known and may be cited as the Community Safety Partnership Act.



"§ 17F-11.1. Definitions.

As used in this Article, unless the context requires otherwise, the following definitions apply:

- (1) Approved community safety meeting. – A neighborhood watch program meeting or training session approved by the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety as being legitimately constituted and operated for the purpose of improving the safety of communities in the State.
- (2) Certified Community Safety Attendance System. – A digital system implemented by the State to verify and track participation in neighborhood watch programs and police engagement initiatives.
- (3) Commission. – The Community Safety Partnership Commission.
- (4) Department. – The Department of Public Safety.
- (5) Eligible participants. – Residents who actively engage in certified neighborhood watch programs and law enforcement officers participating in community engagement efforts.
- (6) Fund. – The Community Safety Partnership Fund.
- (7) Grant Program. – The Community Safety Partnership Competitive Grant Program.
- (8) Law enforcement officer. – A full-time sworn law enforcement officer certified under Chapter 17C or Chapter 17E of the General Statutes and employed in that capacity by the State or any county or municipal government of the State.
- (9) Neighborhood watch programs. – Organized community efforts, recognized by local law enforcement, that aim to reduce crime and improve neighborhood safety.

"§ 17F-11.2. The Community Safety Partnership Fund.

(a) Fund Created. – The Community Safety Partnership Fund is established as a special fund within the Department of Public Safety. The Department is responsible for administering the Fund using personnel and other administrative resources of the Department.

(b) Fund Purpose. – The Fund shall be utilized to distribute grant funds pursuant to the Community Safety Partnership Grant Program created by this Article.

(c) Fund Sources. – The Fund may receive any of the following:

- (1) Funds appropriated by the General Assembly.
- (2) Funds received pursuant to State law.
- (3) Gifts, grants, or donations from any public or private source.

"§ 17F-11.3. The Community Safety Partnership Competitive Grant Program.

(a) Grant Program. – There is established the Community Safety Partnership Competitive Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Public Safety for the purpose of awarding and distributing grants to county and municipal governments, including internal departments, divisions, or offices of those governments, and nonprofit organizations to support community-led safety projects, which may include any of the following:

- (1) Improved street lighting.
- (2) Increased security cameras or maintenance of security cameras.
- (3) Community alert systems.
- (4) Other projects with the goal of supporting community-led safety efforts.

(b) Funding. – The Grant Program shall be funded by the Community Safety Partnership Fund created by this Article.

(c) Grant Program Guidelines. – The Department shall develop guidelines and procedures for the administration of the Grant Program, including, at a minimum, the following requirements and limitations:

- (1) The Department shall prioritize awarding grants to applicants serving high-crime and underserved areas of the State.

- (2) The maximum grant amount shall not exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000).
- (3) The maximum total award amount to a grantee during a single fiscal year shall not exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000).
- (4) Each grantee shall serve residents of this State by performing one or more community-led safety projects listed in subsection (a) of this section.
- (5) Each grant applicant shall include in its application a detailed explanation of how the applicant plans to use the grant funds, including, at a minimum, each of the following:
- a. A description of the geographic area the applicant serves and the needs of victims in that area.
 - b. A plan to perform one or more community-led safety projects listed in subsection (a) of this section.
 - c. A description of the applicant's capacity to implement its plan under sub-subdivision b. of this subdivision, including the applicant's staffing levels, systems, partnerships, existing funding, and existing programs.
- (6) No later than one year after the receipt of grant funds pursuant to the Grant Program, grantees shall report to the Department of Public Safety each of the following:
- a. Progress on the development and implementation of its plan as delineated in its grant application.
 - b. A detailed explanation of the uses of the grant funds.
 - c. The number of persons served by use of the grant funds.
 - d. The amount of grant funds remaining at the time of reporting.
 - e. Any additional information required by the Department.
- (d) Reporting. – No later than March 1 of each year, the Department of Public Safety shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety regarding the Grant Program, including, at a minimum, each of the following:
- (1) The number, amount, and recipient of all grant funds awarded in the prior calendar year.
 - (2) All information received pursuant to the grantee reports required by subsection (c) of this section.
 - (3) The current, unencumbered funds available within the Community Safety Partnership Fund.
- (e) Disbursements. – If grant funds awarded under this section cannot be paid due to insufficient funds in the Fund, payment shall be delayed until sufficient funds are available and no further grant awards shall be made until sufficient funds are available.
- "§ 17F-11.4. Approved Community Safety Meeting Attendance System.**
- (a) Development. – The Department of Revenue shall develop a statewide digital tracking system to record attendance at approved community safety meetings.
 - (b) Participation. – Any chair or other entity in charge of an approved community safety meeting in which any participant requests the recordation of that participant's attendance at the meeting shall record or cause to be recorded all of the following:
- (1) First and last name of the participant.
 - (2) Date of the meeting.
 - (3) Neighborhood watch organization for which the meeting was held.
 - (4) Location of the meeting.
 - (5) Signature of the participant.
 - (6) Name and signature of the chair or a representative of the entity in charge of the meeting.

1 (c) Reporting. – On a monthly basis, chairs or other entities in charge of approved
2 community safety meetings shall submit to the Department of Revenue all participation
3 information recorded pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

4 (d) Form. – The recordation and reporting of participation information under this section
5 shall be completed on forms developed or authorized by the Department of Revenue for that
6 purpose.

7 (e) Law Enforcement Officers. – For purposes of reporting under this Article, law
8 enforcement officers shall be considered participants when attending an approved community
9 safety meeting.

10 **"§ 17F-11.5. Community Safety Partnership Citizen Incentive Program.**

11 The Department of Public Safety shall notify the public, as well as chairs or representatives
12 of entities in charge of approved community safety meetings, of the opportunity for qualifying
13 attendees of those meetings to receive a tax credit pursuant to G.S. 105-153.12.

14 **"§ 17F-11.6. Community Safety Partnership Officer Incentive Program.**

15 (a) Incentive Program. – A law enforcement officer that attends at least 10 approved
16 community safety meetings in the same calendar year shall receive from the officer's employer a
17 one-time bonus of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) within 60 days of that officer
18 attending the tenth meeting. A law enforcement officer that attends at least 20 approved
19 community safety meetings in the same calendar year shall receive from the officer's employer
20 an additional one-time bonus under this section of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) within 60 days
21 of that officer attending the twentieth meeting.

22 (b) Attendance System. – For purposes of implementing this section, State, county, and
23 municipal government employers of law enforcement officers shall develop a community safety
24 attendance system for tracking law enforcement officer attendance at approved community safety
25 meetings. Upon request, the law enforcement officer shall be furnished with a copy of the
26 officer's attendance record for the requested calendar year.

27 (c) Bonus payments made pursuant to this section shall supplement the salary of a law
28 enforcement officer.

29 **"§ 17F-11.7. Community Safety Partnership Commission.**

30 (a) There is established the Community Safety Partnership Commission of the
31 Department of Public Safety to ensure transparency and proper implementation of this Article.

32 (b) The Commission shall consist of eight members as follows:

33 (1) Three members appointed by the General Assembly upon the joint
34 recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker
35 of the House of Representatives pursuant to G.S. 120-121.

36 (2) Two members that are representatives of law enforcement agencies, one upon
37 the recommendation of the Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards
38 Commission and one upon the recommendation of the Sheriffs' Education and
39 Training Standards Commission.

40 (3) Two members that are community representatives from neighborhood watch
41 programs appointed by the Governor.

42 (4) One member appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety.

43 (c) Members shall serve terms of four years. A member shall continue to serve until the
44 member's successor is duly appointed, but a holdover under this provision does not affect the
45 expiration date of the succeeding term.

46 (d) In case of a vacancy on the Commission before the expiration of a member's term, a
47 successor shall be appointed within 30 days of the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired
48 term by the appropriate appointing official or entity pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.
49 Vacancies in legislative appointments shall be filled under G.S. 120-122.

50 (e) The Commission shall elect one of its members as chairman to serve until the
51 expiration of the member's term.

- (f) A majority of the Commission constitutes a quorum to transact business.
- (g) Members shall receive compensation and reimbursement for expenses as provided in G.S. 138-5.
- (h) The Commission shall meet at the call of the chairman and at least two times per calendar year.
- (i) No later than March 1 of each year, the Commission shall report to the Department of Public Safety and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, including, at a minimum, the following information:
- (1) Participation levels in neighborhood watch programs.
- (2) Effectiveness of projects funded with grants awarded by the Community Safety Partnership Competitive Grant Program.
- (3) Distribution and impact of law enforcement officer bonuses paid pursuant to G.S. 17F-11.6.
- (4) Any other information the Commission wishes to include related to its oversight of the Community Safety Partnership Act.
- (j) The Department of Public Safety shall make reports received pursuant to subsection (i) of this section publicly available. The Department shall, at a minimum, post these reports on its website.

"Article 5.

Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-12. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-13. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-14. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"Article 6.

Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-16. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-17. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-18. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"§ 17F-19. Reserved for future codification purposes.

"Article 7.

"Disposition of Equipment, Property, and Service Animals.

"§ 17F-20. Badges and service side arms of deceased or retiring members of State, city, and county law enforcement agencies; weapons of active members.

...

"§ 17F-21. Disposition of retired service animals.

...."

SECTION 1.(b) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Community Safety Partnership Fund, created by subsection (a) of this section, the sum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) in recurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to be used pursuant to the requirements of that fund.

SECTION 1.(c) Subsection (a) of this section becomes effective July 1, 2026, and applies to approved community safety meetings attended on or after that date. The remainder of this section becomes effective July 1, 2026.

SECTION 2.(a) Article 4 of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 105-153.12. Tax credit for taxpayer attending approved community safety meetings.

(a) Credit. – A taxpayer that attends at least 10 approved community safety meetings, as evidenced by the Department of Revenue statewide digital tracking system created pursuant to G.S. 17F-11.4, in the taxable year, is allowed a credit against the tax imposed by this Part. The amount of the credit is equal to five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

1 (b) Limitations. – A nonresident or part-year resident who claims the credit allowed by
2 this section shall reduce the amount of the credit as required under G.S. 105-153.4.

3 (c) Credit Refundable. – If the credit allowed by this section exceeds the amount of tax
4 imposed by this Part for the taxable year reduced by the sum of all credits allowable, the Secretary
5 must refund the excess to the taxpayer. The refundable excess is governed by the provisions
6 governing a refund of an overpayment by the taxpayer of the tax imposed in this Part. In
7 computing the amount of tax against which multiple credits are allowed, nonrefundable credits
8 are subtracted before refundable credits."

9 **SECTION 2.(b)** This section is effective for taxable years beginning on or after
10 January 1, 2026.

11 **SECTION 3.** The Department of Public Safety and the Department of Revenue shall
12 promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this act.

13 **SECTION 4.(a)** If any section or provision of this act is declared unconstitutional or
14 invalid by the courts, it does not affect the validity of this act as a whole or any portion other than
15 the portion declared to be unconstitutional or invalid.

16 **SECTION 4.(b)** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes
17 law.