

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL 623

Short Title: First Responders' Right to Assemble. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Bradley and Mohammed (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 26, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT TO PROTECT THE LABOR RIGHTS OF FIRST RESPONDERS.

Whereas, North Carolina is one of only two states that explicitly prohibit collective bargaining for first responders, thereby denying them a fundamental labor right enjoyed by their counterparts in the majority of states; and

Whereas, studies have demonstrated that collaborative labor-management relationships in public safety sectors lead to improved public safety outcomes. The ability to negotiate for better training, equipment, and protocols directly enhances first responder safety and the effectiveness of service delivery; and

Whereas, North Carolina faces a critical shortage of first responders as threats to public safety continue to expand in scale and complexity. Collective bargaining helps increase job satisfaction and morale among first responders, which is essential for both recruiting new staff and retaining experienced personnel to respond to current and future crises; and

Whereas, the dedication and sacrifice of first responders, who routinely risk their lives to protect the public, merit the provision of collective bargaining rights as a means to uphold the values of safety, quality, and service consistent with North Carolina's commitment to protecting its citizens and supporting those who serve; Now, therefore,  
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 95-98 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 95-98. Contracts between units of government and labor unions, trade unions or labor organizations concerning public employees declared to be illegal.**

(a) ~~Any~~ Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, any agreement, or contract, between the governing authority of any city, town, county, or other municipality, or between any agency, unit, or instrumentality thereof, or between any agency, instrumentality, or institution of the State of North Carolina, and any labor union, trade union, or labor organization, as bargaining agent for any public employees of such city, town, county or other municipality, or agency or instrumentality of government, is hereby declared to be against the public policy of the State, illegal, unlawful, void and of no effect.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, first responders may bargain collectively with the governing authority of any city, town, county, or other municipality. This section does not affect the prohibition on strikes under G.S. 95-98.1."

**SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.

