
NORTH CAROLINA REPORT · AUGUST 2026

Health Care in *Crisis*

*Trump and Republicans are making health
care unaffordable for North Carolinians.*

A NORTH CAROLINA REPORT · AUGUST 2026

Trump promised “great healthcare at the right price.” Instead, North Carolinians are *losing coverage at breakneck speed*.

In December, Donald Trump told his supporters in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, “I’m bringing the prices down and I’m bringing them down fast,” promising the crowd they would soon have “great healthcare at the right price.” Instead of meeting this promise, health care costs have gone through the roof thanks to Trump and his allies in Congress. Working families, children, seniors, and small business owners across the state are losing coverage at breakneck speed and paying more than ever for health care. Trump and Republicans in Congress launched an all-out assault on the health care system when they slashed \$1 trillion from Medicaid and ripped away life-saving ACA tax credits last year. The result? A deliberate, manufactured health care crisis that is forcing North Carolina families off coverage, pushing premiums to historic highs, driving Tar Heel State hospitals and clinics toward closure, and leaving rural communities without access to care. Now, North Carolina residents are suffering under an unprecedented disaster that is the direct result of Trump’s failed policies, as hundreds of thousands lose coverage and nearly a million North Carolinians watch their premiums skyrocket this year – all while Trump and his billionaire buddies cash in on some of the biggest tax breaks in history.

— BY THE NUMBERS

North Carolina's health care affordability crisis, in figures.

600,000+

North Carolinians who could lose Medicaid or ACA coverage entirely because of Trump-GOP cuts.

NC Budget & Tax Center

270,000+

North Carolinians who have already lost the health care coverage they depended on.

KFF

~150%

Average ACA premium increase this year for the nearly 900,000 North Carolinians who bought insurance with tax credits.

Center for American Progress

\$728M

Annual loss to North Carolina hospitals from Trump-GOP Medicaid cuts alone – among the largest in the country.

Third Way

\$49.9B

Federal Medicaid funding North Carolina will lose over the next decade under the Trump-GOP bill.

NC DHHS

30,000

Statewide layoffs the Medicaid cuts could trigger across doctors, nurses, and small-town economies.

WRAL

23

North Carolina hospitals, wards, and clinics closed, cutting services, or at risk of closure since the Trump-GOP cuts passed.

Protect Our Care · Hospital Crisis Watch

1.2M

North Carolina children covered by Medicaid – 43% of everyone on the program in the state.

KFF · Medicaid Fact Sheet

SECTION 01 · CONCERN

North Carolinians are deeply concerned about *rising health care costs*.

— *Health care affordability is a top issue for North Carolina voters.*

North Carolina is consistently ranked among the most expensive states in the entire country for health care, and Trump and the GOP's cuts are making a bad situation worse. Health care costs top the list of what Americans worry about affording, with nearly two-thirds of the public worried about paying for health insurance and out-of-pocket costs. 80% of ACA enrollees say their 2026 costs are higher, and 55% are cutting back on food or basic household items, just to afford health care.

“*Too many North Carolinians risk either being priced out of health insurance entirely, or paying exorbitant costs to keep essential coverage.*

— GOVERNOR JOSH STEIN · LETTER TO FEDERAL LAWMAKERS

— *North Carolinians wanted Trump and Republicans in Congress to extend ACA tax credits.*

Governor Josh Stein warned federal lawmakers that “too many North Carolinians risk either being priced out of health insurance entirely” or paying exorbitant costs to keep essential coverage, but Trump and Republicans refused to act. A recent KFF Health Tracking Poll found 67% of Americans say Republicans in Congress did the “wrong thing” by not extending the credits. As many as 1 in 4 people enrolled in ACA coverage said they were “very likely” to go without insurance in 2026 if premiums more than double in cost.

SECTION 02 · MEDICAID & ACA CUTS

Trump and the GOP cut Medicaid and the ACA for *working North Carolinians*.

— *Trump and Republicans enacted the largest Medicaid cuts in the program's 60-year history.*

Last year, Trump and Republicans in Congress slashed over \$1 trillion from Medicaid and the ACA, imposing sweeping Medicaid work reporting requirements, mandating eligibility renewals every six months, and sharply restricting how states like North Carolina fund Medicaid. More than 3 million North Carolinians, roughly 1 in 4 residents, rely on Medicaid – including 50% of all births and 67% of nursing home residents in the state. State officials estimate more than 255,000 North Carolinians will ultimately lose coverage under the new requirements, including many kicked off the rolls over red tape and paperwork, not eligibility.

— *Trump-GOP cuts threaten to wipe out North Carolina's Medicaid expansion entirely.*

State law ties North Carolina's Medicaid expansion to federal funding levels, meaning the Trump-GOP cuts could trigger an automatic unwinding of the expansion and rip away coverage from the more than 685,000 North Carolinians who have enrolled since late 2023.

— *North Carolina kids rely on health care programs Trump and the GOP gutted.*

Around 1.2 million North Carolina children are covered by Medicaid. Kids make up 43% of everyone on the program in the state, leaving North Carolina's children disproportionately exposed to Trump and the GOP's massive cuts to health care.

SECTION 02 · CONTINUED

Premiums *doubled overnight*. 270,000+ already lost coverage.

Premiums doubled overnight after Republicans killed ACA tax credits.

After Trump and Republicans refused to extend critical ACA tax credits, the nearly 900,000 North Carolinians receiving credits, which averaged \$574 a month in savings, faced an estimated average premium increase of nearly 150% to keep their coverage for 2026. A 60-year-old couple in North Carolina making \$85,000 a year, for example, saw their average annual ACA premium costs rise by \$25,292 to hit \$32,517 this year – more than \$2,700 a month.

Over 270,000 North Carolinians have already lost the health care coverage they relied on.

Since the passage of Trump and Republicans' massive health care cuts, over 270,000 fewer North Carolinians are enrolled in health care coverage through Medicaid/CHIP and the ACA.

Nearly 165,000 lose ACA coverage.

Nearly 165,000 North Carolinians have lost or dropped their ACA health care coverage, a 21% decline in effectuated enrollment. ACA effectuated enrollment dropped to 609,544 this year, compared to 774,226 in 2025. ACA enrollment fell in nearly every one of North Carolina's 100 counties.

Over 100,000 lose Medicaid/CHIP.

Over 105,000 North Carolinians have already lost Medicaid/CHIP coverage since Trump and Republicans cut around \$1 trillion from the program last year. Before the passage of the Trump-GOP cuts, Medicaid/CHIP enrollment in the state was 2,952,233. By March 2026, it had dropped to 2,845,546.

North Carolina's uninsured rate is set to rise for the first time in nearly two decades.

Experts warn that as healthier people drop coverage and hospitals absorb more uncompensated care, premiums will climb even higher for everyone who stays insured. The fallout is already rippling across the state's health care system: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina recorded a net loss of nearly half a billion dollars in 2025.

— *Local small businesses are losing health care.*

136,200 small business owners and 91,300 self-employed workers in the state rely on the ACA for coverage, more than one in six ACA enrollees in North Carolina. 87% of small business owners wanted Congress to permanently extend ACA tax credits.

SECTION 03 · HOSPITALS

North Carolina hospitals are *closing* & rural health care is at risk.

— Trump-GOP cuts are sucking billions out of the state economy.

Thanks to the Trump-GOP bill, North Carolina is bracing for a \$49.9 billion decrease in federal Medicaid funding over the next decade, which could trigger as many as 30,000 layoffs statewide, hitting doctors, nurses, and the small-town economies that depend on them. The damage has already started: the state has begun cutting what it pays doctors and hospitals to treat Medicaid patients, with systems like ECU Health projecting \$50 million in losses this fiscal year alone.

— North Carolina hospitals are losing nearly \$728 million every year as GOP slashes critical funding.

The Trump-GOP cuts include caps to the provider taxes that North Carolina hospitals rely on in order to stay afloat. North Carolina hospitals alone are estimated to lose nearly \$728 million a year in critical funding, which is among the largest hospital losses of any state in the country.

SECTION 03 · HOSPITAL CRISIS WATCH

23 North Carolina hospitals and clinics *already closed*, cutting services, or at risk.

Protect Our Care's Hospital Crisis Watch has found 23 health care facilities in North Carolina that have already been severely impacted since Trump and the GOP passed their cuts to health care last July:

AT-RISK

Western North Carolina Community Health Services – Minnie Jones Health Center · Mission Hospital · Western North Carolina Community Health Services – Hominy Valley Health Center · UNC Rockingham Hospital · Angel Medical Center · UNC Health Lenoir · Scotland Health · Western North Carolina Community Health Services – McDowell Health Center · CarolinaEast Medical Center · Person Memorial Hospital · Chatham Hospital · Blue Ridge Regional Hospital · Martin General Hospital

**CUTS
ANNOUNCED**

Duke University School of Medicine · Cape Fear Valley Medical Center · ECU Health

**CLOSED OR
CLOSING**

Carolina House · A Woman's Choice of Greensboro · Lovely Day ABA & Autism Analyst · Greenville Women's Care · Jacksonville Children's & Multispecialty Clinic of Neurology · HealthFirst Wellness Center · Wilmington Health Urology

SECTION 03 · RURAL NORTH CAROLINA

Rural North Carolina hospitals are *most at-risk*.

Rural North Carolina hospitals are most at-risk.

Rural communities have the most to lose from Medicaid cuts. Nearly 39% of the state's 3.1 million Medicaid enrollees live in rural areas, and in many rural counties, more than half the population is covered by Medicaid. Researchers at UNC's Sheps Center found that 54 North Carolina hospitals could be forced to close because of the federal cuts, and the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform identified ten of the state's rural hospitals at risk of closing, with six at immediate risk of closing within the next two to three years.

Trump's pity rural health fund won't cover his massive cuts to North Carolina's rural health care infrastructure.

In response to concerns about cuts to Medicaid, the Trump administration doled out a pitiful \$213 million rural health care grant to North Carolina. This is just a fraction of a single year of the state's losses and less than half of one percent of the nearly \$50 billion in federal Medicaid funding being ripped away. The grant also offers no guarantees that the money will go to the hospitals that need it the most.

SECTION 04 · OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS

Out-of-pocket costs are rising in North Carolina – despite *Trump's promises*.

— *Trump is protecting Big Pharma's profits while North Carolina seniors pay more.*

While Trump has publicly declared that drug prices are dropping, his health care cuts carved out an expanded orphan drug exemption shielding nearly one-third of high-priced drugs from the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program passed by President Biden and Democrats in Congress. The carve-out gives Big Pharma \$8.8 billion over 10 years at the expense of taxpayers and seniors, raising out-of-pocket costs for North Carolina's nearly 1.8 million prescription drug beneficiaries on Medicare. Meanwhile, Medicare premiums rose to \$202.90 a month in 2026 (up \$17.90), and the annual deductible rose to \$283. Last year, monthly out-of-pocket costs for brand-name drugs under Medicare Part D jumped 26% to \$108 a month.

— *Trump killed a program that keeps seniors' Medicare drug coverage affordable.*

In July, the Wall Street Journal revealed that the Trump administration is ending a Medicare Part D subsidy program that holds down premiums for seniors' prescription drug coverage, starting in 2027. On top of the Big Pharma carve-outs and \$1 trillion in health care cuts, ending the program means "countless seniors will soon pay more" just to keep the drug coverage they rely on for life-saving medications. This is a direct hit to older North Carolinians living on fixed incomes, for whom even a small premium hike can force a choice between prescriptions, groceries, and the power bill.

— *688 drug prices have gone up since Trump took office.*

A September 2025 Senate HELP Committee report found that 688 prescription drugs have increased in price since Trump took office, with a median increase of 5.5% and 25 drugs more than doubling. Of the 17 pharmaceutical companies Trump personally asked to lower prices, 15 raised prices regardless. The companies that signed deals with Trump also made huge profits during the first full year of Trump's second term, raking in a combined \$177 billion in profits – an explosive 66% increase in profits from 2024.

DEFEND AMERICA ACTION

DEFEND AMERICA ACTION • AUGUST 2026

North Carolina families are losing coverage. It's time to fight back.

Defend America Action is a 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to defending working families from the destructive policies of the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans.

Every figure and citation in this report links to its source – from KFF and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities to Protect Our Care's Hospital Crisis Watch, UNC's Sheps Center, and North Carolina's independent newsrooms.

DefendAmericaAction.org

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