

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 437  
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/8/25  
Senate Judiciary Committee Substitute Adopted 6/10/26

Short Title: Drug-Free Zones/Unauthorized Public Camping.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 19, 2025

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH DRUG-FREE HOMELESS SERVICE ZONES AND INCREASE  
3 THE PUNISHMENT IMPOSED FOR COMMITTING CERTAIN DRUG OFFENSES IN  
4 A DRUG-FREE HOMELESS SERVICE ZONE AND BAN UNAUTHORIZED PUBLIC  
5 CAMPING OR SLEEPING IN THE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS OF  
6 THE STATE.

7 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

8  
9 **DRUG-FREE HOMELESS SERVICE ZONES**

10 **SECTION 1.(a)** This section shall be known as "The Drug-Free Homeless Service  
11 Zones Act."

12 **SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 90-95(e) reads as rewritten:

13 "(e) The prescribed punishment and degree of any offense under this Article shall be  
14 subject to the following conditions, but the punishment for an offense may be increased only by  
15 the maximum authorized under any one of the applicable conditions:

16 ...

17 (8) Any person 21 years of age or older who commits an offense under  
18 G.S. 90-95(a)(1) on property used for a child care center, or for an elementary  
19 or secondary school or within 1,000 feet of the boundary of real property used  
20 for a child care center, or for an elementary or secondary school shall be  
21 punished as a Class E felon. For purposes of this subdivision, the transfer of  
22 less than five grams of marijuana for no remuneration shall not constitute a  
23 delivery in violation of G.S. 90-95(a)(1). For purposes of this subdivision, a  
24 child care center is as defined in G.S. 110-86(3)a., and that is licensed by the  
25 Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

26 (8a) Any person who commits an offense under G.S. 90-95(a)(1) in a drug-free  
27 homeless service zone is guilty of a Class E felony if the person knows or  
28 reasonably should know that it is a drug-free homeless service zone. Any  
29 operator of a facility-based service who intentionally allows a person to  
30 commit an offense under G.S. 90-95(a)(1) in a drug-free homeless service  
31 zone is guilty of a Class H felony. For purposes of this subdivision, the transfer  
32 of less than five grams of marijuana for no remuneration shall not constitute a  
33 delivery in violation of G.S. 90-95(a)(1). The following definitions apply in  
34 this subdivision:



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- 1                   a.     Drug-free homeless service zone. – The following areas related to a
- 2                             facility-based service:
- 3                             1.     If the facility-based service does not provide the services
- 4                                     described in sub-sub-subdivision 2. of this sub-subdivision, the
- 5                                     exterior and interior of any building and any accompanying
- 6                                     grounds used by a facility-based service and the area within
- 7                                     100 feet of that building or its accompanying grounds, if at
- 8                                     least one sign is permanently affixed in a visible manner at the
- 9                                     exterior of the main entrance of the facility that identifies the
- 10                                    building and its accompanying grounds as a drug-free
- 11                                    homeless service zone. The presence of this sign shall raise a
- 12                                    presumption that the person committing the offense knows or
- 13                                    reasonably should know that it is a drug-free homeless service
- 14                                    zone.
- 15                             2.     If the facility-based service provides shelter or housing for
- 16                                     victims of domestic violence that may be endangered if the
- 17                                     purpose or location of the facility were to become known, the
- 18                                     interior of any building and any outdoor area that may only be
- 19                                     accessed by entering through the building used by a
- 20                                     facility-based service, if at least one sign is permanently
- 21                                     affixed in a visible manner inside the building and within 5 feet
- 22                                     of the main entrance of the facility that identifies the building
- 23                                     as a drug-free homeless service zone. The presence of this sign
- 24                                     shall raise a presumption that the person committing the
- 25                                     offense knows or reasonably should know that it is a drug-free
- 26                                     homeless service zone.
- 27                   b.     Facility-based service. – Any (i) emergency or temporary shelter,
- 28                             transitional housing provider, or permanent supportive housing entity
- 29                             that receives local, State, or federal funds for the purpose of providing
- 30                             shelter to homeless persons or (ii) other entity or facility that receives
- 31                             local, State, or federal funds and primarily provides treatment,
- 32                             preventive care, or other services to homeless persons.
- 33                   c.     Operator. – A sole proprietorship, corporation, partnership, joint
- 34                             venture, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, limited
- 35                             liability company, or any other entity or business association, or
- 36                             contractor or subcontractor of the same, that is the recipient of local,
- 37                             State, or federal funds to use for the provision of a facility-based
- 38                             service.

...."

SECTION 1.(c) This section becomes effective December 1, 2026, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.

**UNAUTHORIZED PUBLIC CAMPING AND SLEEPING**

SECTION 2.(a) Article 9 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

**"§ 160D-917. Camping in public spaces.**

- (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:
  - (1) Department. – The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or the county health department if designated by DHHS.
  - (2) Public camping or sleeping. – Lodging or residing overnight in a temporary outdoor habitation used as a dwelling or living space and evidenced by the

1 erection of a tent or other temporary shelter, the presence of bedding or  
2 pillows, or the storage of personal belongings or lodging or residing overnight  
3 in an outdoor space without a tent or other temporary shelter. The term does  
4 not include (i) lodging or residing overnight in a motor vehicle that is  
5 registered, insured, and located in a place where it may be lawfully used or  
6 (ii) camping for recreational purposes on property designated for those  
7 purposes.

8 (b) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, a local government may not  
9 authorize or otherwise allow any person to regularly engage in public camping or sleeping on  
10 any public property, including any public building or its grounds and any public right-of-way  
11 under the jurisdiction of the local government.

12 (c) The governing board of a local government may, by majority vote, designate property  
13 owned by the local government within its jurisdictional boundaries to be used for a continuous  
14 period of no longer than one year for the purposes of public camping or sleeping. Except for a  
15 local government on the Unit Assistance List prepared by the Local Government Commission,  
16 the local government shall, in making the property designation, establish and maintain minimum  
17 standards and procedures related to the designated property for the purposes of:

- 18 (1) Ensuring the safety and security of the designated property and the persons  
19 lodging or residing on the designated property.
- 20 (2) Maintaining sanitation, which must, at a minimum, include providing access  
21 to clean and operable restrooms and running water.
- 22 (3) Coordinating with the county health department to provide access to  
23 behavioral health services, which must include substance abuse and mental  
24 health treatment resources.
- 25 (4) Prohibiting illegal substance use and alcohol use on the designated property  
26 and enforcing the prohibition against such use.

27 (d) The local government's designation of property under subsection (c) of this section  
28 shall not become effective until the designated property is certified by the Department. To obtain  
29 the certification, the local government shall submit a request to the Secretary of the Department  
30 which shall include documentation proving all of the following:

- 31 (1) There are not sufficient open beds in homeless shelters in the local  
32 government for the homeless population of the local government.
- 33 (2) The designated property is not contiguous to property zoned for residential  
34 use by the local government.
- 35 (3) The designated property would not adversely and materially affect the  
36 property value or safety and security of other existing residential or  
37 commercial property in the local government and would not negatively affect  
38 the safety of children.
- 39 (4) The local government has developed a plan to satisfy the minimum standards  
40 and procedures prescribed in subsection (c) of this section.

41 (e) Within 10 days after receipt of a request to certify a designated property, the  
42 Department shall notify the local government of the date the request was received and of any  
43 omissions or errors in the request. The Department shall certify the designated property within  
44 45 days after receipt of a complete submission from the local government, and the designated  
45 property shall be deemed certified on the forty-fifth day if the Department takes no action.

46 (f) Within 30 days after certification of a designated property by the Department, the  
47 local government shall publish the minimum standards and procedures required by subsection  
48 (c) of this section on the local government's website. The local government shall continue to  
49 make the standards and procedures publicly available for as long as any local government  
50 property remains designated under subsection (d) of this section.

1       (g) The Department may inspect any designated property at any time, and the Department  
2 shall provide notice to the local government recommending closure of the designated property if  
3 the requirements of this section are no longer satisfied. A local government shall publish any  
4 notice recommending closure on the local government's website not later than five business days  
5 after receipt of the notice.

6       (h) Any resident of the local government, any owner of a business located in the local  
7 government, or the Attorney General may bring a civil action in any court of competent  
8 jurisdiction against the local government to enjoin a violation of subsection (b) of this section. If  
9 the resident or business owner prevails in a civil action, the court may award reasonable expenses  
10 incurred in bringing the civil action, including court costs, reasonable attorneys' fees,  
11 investigative costs, witness fees, and deposition costs. An application for an injunction under this  
12 subsection shall be accompanied by an affidavit attesting to all of the following:

13           (1) The applicant has provided written notice of the alleged violation to the  
14 governing board of the local government.

15           (2) The applicant has provided the local government with five business days to  
16 cure the alleged violation.

17           (3) The local government has failed to take all reasonable actions within its  
18 governmental powers to cure the alleged violation within five business days  
19 after receiving written notice of the alleged violation from the applicant.

20       (i) This section does not apply during any time period in which:

21           (1) The Governor has declared a state of emergency pursuant to G.S. 166A-19.20.

22           (2) A local government has declared a state of emergency pursuant to  
23 G.S. 166A-19.22."

24       **SECTION 2.(b)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2026.

25  
26 **EFFECTIVE DATE**

27       **SECTION 3.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes  
28 law.