

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007**

**SESSION LAW 2007-508
SENATE BILL 1546**

AN ACT TO CLARIFY THE PUBLIC'S ACCESS TO PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL RECORDS AND TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE LAW PERTAINING TO CONFIDENTIALITY OF COMPETITIVE HEALTH CARE INFORMATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 115C-320 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-320. Certain records open to inspection.

Each local board of education shall maintain a record of each of its employees, showing the following information with respect to each employee: name, age, date of original employment or appointment, the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the board has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession, current position, title, current salary, date and amount of most recent increase or decrease in salary, date of most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification, and the office or station to which the employee is currently assigned. For the purposes of this section, the term "salary" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other forms of compensation paid by the employing entity. Subject only to rules and regulations for the safekeeping of records adopted by the local board of education, every person having custody of the records shall permit them to be inspected and examined and copies made by any person during regular business hours. The name of a participant in the Address Confidentiality Program established pursuant to Chapter 15C of the General Statutes shall not be open to inspection and shall be redacted from any record released pursuant to this section. Any person who is denied access to any record for the purpose of inspecting, examining or copying the record shall have a right to compel compliance with the provisions of this section by application to a court of competent jurisdiction for a writ of mandamus or other appropriate relief."

SECTION 2. G.S. 115D-28 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115D-28. Certain records open to inspection.

Each board of trustees shall maintain a record of each of its employees, showing the following information with respect to each employee: name, age, date of original employment or appointment, the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the board has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession, current position, title, current salary, date and amount of most recent increase or decrease in salary, date of

most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification, and the office or station to which the employee is currently assigned. For the purposes of this section, the term "salary" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other forms of compensation paid by the employing entity. Subject only to rules and regulations for the safekeeping of records adopted by the board of trustees, every person having custody of the records shall permit them to be inspected and examined and copies made by any person during regular business hours. Any person who is denied access to any record for the purpose of inspecting, examining or copying the record shall have a right to compel compliance with the provisions of this section by application to a court of competent jurisdiction for a writ of mandamus or other appropriate relief."

SECTION 3. G.S. 122C-158(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) The following information with respect to each employee is a matter of public record: name; age; date of original employment or appointment to the area authority; the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the agency has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession; current position title; current salary; date and amount of most recent increase or decrease in salary; date of the most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification; and the office to which the employee is currently assigned. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "salary" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other forms of compensation paid by the employing entity. The area authority shall determine in what form and by whom this information will be maintained. Any person may have access to this information for the purpose of inspection, examination, and copying during regular business hours, subject only to rules for the safekeeping of public records as the area authority may have adopted. Any person denied access to this information may apply to the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice for an order compelling disclosure, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue these orders."

SECTION 4. G.S. 126-23 reads as rewritten:

"§ 126-23. Certain records to be kept by State agencies open to inspection.

Each department, agency, institution, commission and bureau of the State shall maintain a record of each of its employees, showing the following information with respect to each such employee: name, age, date of original employment or appointment to the State service, the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the agency has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession, current position, title, current salary, date and amount of most recent increase or decrease in salary, date of most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification, and the office or station to which the employee is currently assigned. For the purposes of this section, the term "salary" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other forms of compensation paid by the employing entity. Subject only to rules and regulations for the safekeeping of the records, adopted by the State Personnel Commission, every person having custody of such records shall permit them to be inspected and examined and copies thereof made by any person

during regular business hours. Any person who is denied access to any such record for the purpose of inspecting, examining or copying the same shall have a right to compel compliance with the provisions of this section by application to a court of competent jurisdiction for a writ of mandamus or other appropriate relief."

SECTION 4.5. G.S. 126-22 reads as rewritten:

"§ 126-22. Personnel files not subject to inspection under § 132-6.

(a) Except as provided in G.S. 126-23 and G.S. 126-24, Personnel-personnel files of State employees, former State employees, or applicants for State employment employees shall not be subject to inspection and examination as authorized by G.S. 132-6.

(b) For purposes of this Article a personnel file consists of any information gathered by the department, division, bureau, commission, council, or other agency subject to Article 7 of this Chapter which employs an individual, previously employed an individual, or considered an individual's application for employment, or by the office of State Personnel, and which information relates to the individual's application, selection or nonselection, promotions, demotions, transfers, leave, salary, suspension, performance evaluation forms, disciplinary actions, and termination of employment wherever located and in whatever form the following definitions apply:

- (1) "Employee" means any current State employee, former State employee, or applicant for State employment.
- (2) "Employer" means any State department, university, division, bureau, commission, council, or other agency subject to Article 7 of this Chapter.
- (3) "Personnel file" means any employment-related or personal information gathered by an employer, the Retirement Systems Division of the Department of State Treasurer, or by the Office of State Personnel. Employment-related information contained in a personnel file includes information related to an individual's application, selection, promotion, demotion, transfer, leave, salary, contract for employment, benefits, suspension, performance evaluation, disciplinary actions, and termination. Personal information contained in a personnel file includes an individual's home address, social security number, medical history, personal financial data, marital status, dependents, and beneficiaries.
- (4) "Record" means the personnel information that each employer is required to maintain in accordance with G.S. 126-23.

(c) Personnel files of former State employees who have been separated from State employment for 10 or more years may be open to inspection and examination except for papers and documents relating to demotions and to disciplinary actions resulting in the dismissal of the employee-employee and personnel files maintained by the Retirement Systems Division of the Department of State Treasurer."

SECTION 5. G.S. 130A-45.9(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) The following information with respect to each employee of a public health authority is a matter of public record: name; age; date of original employment or

appointment; beginning and ending dates, position title, position descriptions, and total compensation of current and former positions; the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the authority has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession, and date of the most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification. In addition, the following information with respect to each licensed medical provider employed by or having privileges to practice in a public health facility shall be a matter of public record: educational history and qualifications, date and jurisdiction or original and current licensure; and information relating to medical board certifications or other qualifications of medical specialists. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "total compensation" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other forms of compensation paid by the employing entity."

SECTION 5.5. G.S. 131E-257.2 reads as rewritten:

"§ 131E-257.2. Privacy of employee personnel records.

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 132-6 or any other general law or local act concerning access to public records, personnel files of employees and applicants for employment maintained by a public hospital are subject to inspection and may be disclosed only as provided by this section. For purposes of this section, an employee's personnel file consists of any information in any form gathered by the public hospital with respect to an employee and, by way of illustration but not limitation, relating to the employee's application, selection or nonselection, performance, promotions, demotions, transfers, suspensions and other disciplinary actions, evaluation forms, employment contracts, leave, salary, and termination of employment. As used in this section, "employee" includes both current and former employees of a public hospital.

(b) The following information with respect to each public hospital employee is a matter of public record:

- (1) Name.
- (2) Age.
- (3) Date of original employment.
- (4) Current position ~~title, current salary, and the date and amount of the most recent increase or decrease in salary.~~title.
- (5) Date of the most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation or other change in position classification.
- (6) The office to which the employee is currently assigned.

In addition, the following information with respect to each licensed medical provider employed by or having privileges to practice in a public hospital shall be a matter of public record: educational history and qualifications, date and jurisdiction or original and current licensure; and information relating to medical board certifications or other qualifications of medical specialists.

(b1) In addition, the following information for the last completed fiscal year, beginning with the fiscal year ending in 2008, of a public hospital with respect to each

Covered Officer and the five key employees (who are not Covered Officers) with the highest annual compensation of a public hospital is a matter of public record:

- (1) Base salary.
- (2) Bonus compensation.
- (3) Plan-based incentive compensation.
- (4) Dollar value of all other compensation, which includes any perquisites and other personal benefits.

(b2) As used in this section:

- (1) "Covered Officer" means each of the following:
 - a. All individuals serving as the public hospital's chief executive officer or acting in a similar capacity at any time during the last completed fiscal year, regardless of compensation level.
 - b. The public hospital's four most highly compensated executive officers, determined by the aggregate amount reportable under subdivisions (1) through (4) of subsection (b1) of this section, other than the chief executive officer, who were serving as executive officers at the end of the last completed fiscal year.
 - c. Any individual for whom disclosure would have been provided pursuant to sub-subdivision b. of this subsection but for the fact that the individual's service as an executive officer of the public hospital terminated during the last completed fiscal year.
- (2) "Executive officer" means each employee of the public hospital specifically appointed by the governing board of the public hospital to serve as an officer.
- (3) "Key employee" means any person having responsibilities, powers, or influence similar to those of an officer. The term includes the chief management and administrative officials of a public hospital.

(b3) The governing board of a public hospital shall determine in what form and by whom this information will be maintained. Any person may have access to this information for the purpose of inspection, examination, and copying, during regular business hours, subject only to such rules and regulations for the safekeeping of public records as the governing board of the public hospital may have adopted. Any person denied access to this information may apply to the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice for an order compelling disclosure, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue such orders.

(c) All information contained in a public hospital employee's personnel file, other than the information made public by subsection (b) of this section, is confidential and shall be open to inspection only in the following instances:

- (1) The employee or the employee's duly authorized agent may examine all portions of the employee's personnel file, except letters of reference solicited prior to employment.
- (2) A licensed physician designated in writing by the employee may examine the employee's medical record.

- (3) A public hospital employee having supervisory authority over the employee may examine all material in the employee's personnel file.
- (4) By order of a court of competent jurisdiction, any person may examine such portion of an employee's personnel file as may be ordered by the court.
- (5) An official of an agency of the State or federal government, or any political subdivision of the State, may inspect any portion of a personnel file when the inspection is deemed by the person having custody of the file to be necessary and essential to the pursuance of a proper function of the inspecting agency, but no information shall be divulged for the purpose of assisting in criminal prosecution of the employee, or for the purpose of assisting in an investigation of the employee's tax liability. However, the official having custody of the records may release the name, address, and telephone number from a personnel file for the purpose of assisting in a criminal investigation.
- (6) An employee may sign a written release, to be placed with the employee's personnel file, that permits the person with custody of the file to provide, either in person, by telephone, or by mail, information specified in the release to prospective employers, educational institutions, or other persons specified in the release.

(d) Even if considered part of an employee's personnel file, the following information need not be disclosed to an employee nor to any other person:

- (1) Testing or examination material used solely to determine individual qualifications for appointment, employment, or promotion in the public hospital's service, when disclosure would compromise the objectivity or the fairness of the testing or examination process.
- (2) Investigative reports or memoranda and other information concerning the investigation of possible criminal actions of an employee, until the investigation is completed and no criminal action taken, or until the criminal action is concluded.
- (3) Information that might identify an undercover law enforcement officer or a law enforcement informer.
- (4) Notes, preliminary drafts, and internal communications concerning an employee. In the event such materials are used for any official personnel decision, then the employee or his duly authorized agent shall have a right to inspect such materials.

(e) The governing board of a public hospital may permit access, subject to limitations they may impose, to selected personnel files by a professional representative of a training, research, or academic institution if that representative certifies that he or she will not release information identifying the employees whose files are opened and that the information will be used solely for statistical, research, or teaching purposes. This certification shall be retained by the public hospital as long as each personnel file so examined is retained.

(f) The governing board of a public hospital that maintains personnel files containing information other than the information mentioned in subsection (b) of this section shall establish procedures whereby an employee who objects to material in his or her file on grounds that it is inaccurate or misleading may seek to have the material removed from the file or may place in the file a statement relating to the material.

(g) A public hospital director, trustee, officer, or employee who knowingly, willfully, and with malice permits any person to have access to information contained in a personnel file, except as is permitted by this section, is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor; however, conviction under this subsection shall be punishable only by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

(h) Any person not specifically authorized by this section to have access to a personnel file designated as confidential, who shall knowingly and willfully examine in its official filing place, or remove, or copy any portion of a confidential personnel file shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor; however, conviction under this subsection shall be punishable, in the discretion of the court, by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00)."

SECTION 6. G.S. 153A-98(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) The following information with respect to each county employee is a matter of public record: name; age; date of original employment or appointment to the county service; the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the county has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession; current position title; current salary; date and amount of the most recent increase or decrease in salary; date of the most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation or other change in position classification; and the office to which the employee is currently assigned. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "salary" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other forms of compensation paid by the employing entity. The board of county commissioners shall determine in what form and by whom this information will be maintained. Any person may have access to this information for the purpose of inspection, examination, and copying, during regular business hours, subject only to such rules and regulations for the safekeeping of public records as the board of commissioners may have adopted. Any person denied access to this information may apply to the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice for an order compelling disclosure, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue such orders."

SECTION 7. G.S. 160A-168(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) The following information with respect to each city employee is a matter of public record: name; age; date of original employment or appointment to the service; the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the city has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession; current position title; current salary; date and amount of the most recent increase or decrease in salary; date of the most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification; and the office to which the employee is currently assigned. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "salary" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other

forms of compensation paid by the employing entity. The city council shall determine in what form and by whom this information will be maintained. Any person may have access to this information for the purpose of inspection, examination, and copying, during regular business hours, subject only to such rules and regulations for the safekeeping of public records as the city council may have adopted. Any person denied access to this information may apply to the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice for an order compelling disclosure, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue such orders."

SECTION 8. G.S. 162A-6.1(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) The following information with respect to each authority employee is a matter of public record: name; age; date of original employment or appointment to the service; the terms of any contract by which the employee is employed whether written or oral, past and current, to the extent that the authority has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession; current position title; current salary; date and amount of the most recent increase or decrease in salary; date of the most recent promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification; and the office to which the employee is currently assigned. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "salary" includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, and deferred and all other forms of compensation paid by the employing entity. The authority shall determine in what form and by whom this information will be maintained. Any person may have access to this information for the purpose of inspection, examination, and copying, during regular business hours, subject only to such rules and regulations for the safekeeping of public records as the authority may have adopted. Any person denied access to this information may apply to the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice for an order compelling disclosure, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue such orders."

SECTION 8.5. G.S. 131E-97.3 reads as rewritten:

"§ 131E-97.3. Confidentiality of competitive health care information.

(a) For the purposes of this section, competitive health care information means ~~Information-information~~ relating to competitive health care activities by or on behalf of hospitals and public hospital ~~authorities shall~~ authorities. Competitive health care information shall be confidential and not a public record under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes; provided that any contract entered into by or on behalf of a public hospital or public hospital authority, as defined in G.S. 159-39, shall be a public record unless otherwise exempted by law, or the contract contains competitive health care information, the determination of which shall be as provided in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) If a public hospital or public hospital authority is requested to disclose any contract which the hospital or hospital authority believes in good faith contains or constitutes competitive health care information, the hospital or hospital authority may either redact the portions of the contract believed to constitute competitive health care information prior to disclosure, or if the entire contract constitutes competitive health care information, refuse disclosure of the contract. The person requesting disclosure of the contract may institute an action pursuant to G.S. 132-9 to compel disclosure of the

contract or any redacted portion thereof. In any action brought under this subsection, the issue for decision by the court shall be whether the contract, or portions of the contract withheld, constitutes competitive health care information, and in making its determination, the court shall be guided by the procedures and standards applicable to protective orders requested under Rule 26(c)(7) of the Rules of Civil Procedure. For the purposes of this section, competitive health care information includes, but is not limited to, contracts entered into by or on behalf of a public hospital or public hospital authority to purchase a medical practice. Before rendering a decision, the court shall review the contract in camera and hear arguments from the parties. If the court finds that the contract constitutes or contains competitive health care information, the court may either deny disclosure or may make such other appropriate orders as are permitted under Rule 26(c) of the Rules of Civil Procedure.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to prevent an elected public body, in closed session, which has responsibility for the hospital, the Attorney General, or the State Auditor from having access to this confidential information. The disclosure to any public entity does not affect the confidentiality of the information. Members of the public entity shall have a duty not to further disclose the confidential information."

SECTION 9. This act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 2nd day of August, 2007.

s/ Marc Basnight
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ Joe Hackney
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley
Governor

Approved 1:09 p.m. this 30th day of August, 2007