

**Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
In-Person/Webinar/Recorded
August 15, 2025
Minutes**

Convene Meeting

Welcome

The meeting of the Board of Trustees for the North Carolina State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees (Plan) was called to order by Chair Bradford B. Briner at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, August 15, 2025.

Roll Call for Attendance

Present: Bradford B. Briner; Melanie Bush; Russell “Rusty” Duke; Kimberly Jones; Brian Miller, M.D.; Mike Stevenson; Joe Slater; Samuel Watts (virtual); Kristin Walker; Cy Vernon.

Absent: None.

Chair Briner confirmed that a quorum was present.

Conflict of Interest

Chair Briner reminded all Board members of their responsibility to avoid conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict. No conflicts were reported.

Reading of SEI Statements into Minutes Pursuant to the Ethics Act § 138A-15(c)

The Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) for newly appointed Board member Joe Slater was recorded in the minutes (Attachment 1). Mr. Slater was welcomed to the Board and recognized for his actuarial expertise.

Consent Agenda (Requires Vote)

Board Vote: Motion by Judge Duke to approve the minutes for the May 20, 2025 meeting and resolution for outgoing Board member Dr. Willis; second by Dr. Miller; Roll call vote: 8 ayes, 0 nays; motion was approved.

Board Vote: Motion by Judge Duke to approve Wayne Prep Academy’s application and instruct Plan staff to inform the school board of directors of this approval; second by Dr. Miller; Roll call vote: 8 ayes, 0 nays; motion was approved.

Board Vote: Motion by Dr. Miller moved, pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 135-48.54(b)(2), that the Board (1) delegate its powers and duties under that section to the Treasurer and (2) the board of directors of charter schools applying for participation in the Plan shall file their applications with the person or entity designated by the Treasurer; second by Mr. Watts; Roll call vote: 8 ayes, 0 nays; motion was approved.

Public Comments

Public comment period was held, with four individuals providing comments.

Executive Administrator Update

Thomas Friedman, Executive Administrator, provided an update on Plan operations, including the following:

- The Plan's financial deficit and the need for premium adjustments.
- Legislative funding support and provider negotiations.
- Introduction of the Lantern program.
- Expansion of preventive care, including coverage for breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRIs).
- Launch of new initiatives: Hello Heart, Hinge Health, Ventricle Health, and diabetes prevention programs.
- Determine ways in which the Plan's rural members can be better served

Legislative Update

Mr. Friedman and staff reported:

- The General Assembly approved additional funding for the Plan.
- Legislative support for enhanced breast cancer screening coverage.
- Future legislative goals include expanding authority for value-based contracting and removing outdated statutory limitations.

Communications Update

Beth Horner, Chief of Staff and Communications Director, outlined outreach strategies:

- Targeted communications for new programs and chronic conditions.
- Open enrollment preparations.
- Transition of the Plan's website to a .gov domain.
- Lantern ID cards to be mailed to all members post-enrollment.

2026 Premiums (Requires Vote)

Board Vote: Motion by Dr. Miller to approve the premium rates and methodology recommended by Plan staff; second by Ms. Bush; Roll call vote: 8 ayes, 0 nays; motion was approved.

Financial Update

Dr. Emma Turner presented a financial update:

- Improved projections due to early legislative funding.
- Medical claims are trending higher than expected.
- Projected year-end reserve of \$800 million, meeting stabilization targets.

Chair Briner called for a vote to move into Closed Session.

Board Vote to move into Closed Session: Motion by Mr. Vernon to enter closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1), (a)(3), 132-1.1(a), 132-1.2(1), and 135-48.10(a) to consult with legal counsel regarding a *vendor pre-litigation dispute and Kadel v. Folwell*; second by Mr. Stevenson; Roll call vote: 8 ayes, 0 nays; motion was approved.

Closed Session

The Board consulted with Ben Garner, Department General Counsel, Aaron Vodicka, Assistant General Counsel, and Joel Heimbach, Assistant General Counsel regarding a vendor pre-litigation dispute and the case of *Kadel v. Folwell*.

Chair Briner called for a vote to return to Open Session.

Board Vote to move into Open Session: Motion by Ms. Jones to return to open session; second by Ms. Bush; Roll call vote: 8 ayes, 0 nays; motion was approved.

Adjournment

Chair Briner called for a vote to adjourn the meeting.

Board Vote to adjourn the meeting: Motion to adjourn by Ms. Bush; second by Dr. Miller; Roll call vote: 8 ayes, 0 nays; motion was approved.

The Board adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Joel Heimbach, Secretary

Approved by: _____



Bradford B. Briner
Chairman of Board of Trustees
North Carolina State Health Plan

Attachment 1



NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF STATE TREASURER

BRADFORD B. B
STATE TREASURER OF NORTH CA

OFFICE OF THE STATE TREASURER

State Health Plan Board of Trustees
August 15, 2025 Meeting

MISCELLANEOUS NON-ACTION AGENDA ITEM

Statement of Economic Interest evaluations of members pursuant to the Ethics Act § 138A-15(c).

The following packet contains a Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) evaluation issued by the State Ethics Commission. This is being provided for Commission members' review and for recording in the meeting minutes pursuant to the requirements of the State Government Ethics Act. Members are encouraged to review the updated evaluations to inform and remind them of the identified actual or potential conflicts of interest.

The SEI Evaluation for the following is being provided for review:

- Dr. Joseph Slater



STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
POST OFFICE BOX 27685 RALEIGH, NC 27611
PHONE: 919-814-3600

Via Email

July 9, 2025

The Honorable Phil Berger President
Pro Tempore of the Senate 16 West
Jones Street, Room 2008 Raleigh,
North Carolina 27601

Re: Evaluation of Statement of Economic Interest Filed by Mr. Joseph Slater
State Health Plan Board

Dear Senator Berger:

Our office is in receipt of **Mr. Joseph Slater's** 2025 Statement of Economic Interest as an appointee to the **State Health Plan Board ("the Board")**. We have reviewed it for actual and potential conflicts of interest pursuant to Chapter 138A of the North Carolina General Statutes ("N.C.G.S."), also known as the State Government Ethics Act ("the Act").

Compliance with the Act and avoidance of conflicts of interest in the performance of public duties are the responsibilities of every covered person, regardless of this letter's contents. This letter is required by N.C.G.S. § 138A-28(a) and is designed to educate the covered person as to potential issues that could merit particular attention. The letter is not meant to impugn the integrity of the covered person in any way. Advice on compliance with the Act is available to certain public servants and legislative employees under N.C.G.S. § 138A-13.

We did not find an actual conflict of interest but found the potential for a conflict of interest. The potential conflict identified does not prohibit service on this entity.

The State Health Plan insures more than 663,000 state employees, teachers, retirees, current and former lawmakers, state university and community college personnel, state hospital staff and their dependents. The State Health Plan Board of Trustees ("the Board") is statutorily charged with approving the benefits programs, premium rates, co-pays, deductibles, coinsurance maximums, and large contracts for the Plan. The Board also oversees administrative reviews and appeals and is charged with developing and maintaining a strategic plan.

The Act establishes ethical standards for certain public servants and prohibits public servants from: (1) using their positions for their financial benefit or for the benefit of their extended family or business,

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N.C.G.S. § 138A-31; and (2) participating in official actions from which they or certain associated persons might receive a reasonably foreseeable financial benefit, N.C.G.S. § 138A-36(a). The Act also requires public servants to take appropriate steps to remove themselves from proceedings in which their impartiality might reasonably be questioned due to a familial, personal, or financial relationship with a participant in those proceedings. N.C.G.S. § 138A-36(c).

Mr. Slater is the Assistant Vice President of Payor Contracting for Advocate Health, a company that negotiates hospital and physician reimbursements with payors. Therefore, Mr. Slater has the potential for a conflict of interest and should exercise appropriate caution in the performance of his public duties should issues involving Advocate Health come before the Commission for official action.

In addition to the conflicts standards noted above, the Act prohibits public servants from accepting gifts, directly or indirectly (1) from anyone in return for being influenced in the discharge of their official responsibilities, (2) from a lobbyist or lobbyist principal, or (3) from a person or entity which is doing or seeking to do business with the public servant's agency, is regulated or controlled by the public servant's agency, or has particular financial interests that may be affected by the public servant's official actions. Exceptions to the gifts restrictions are set out in N.C.G.S. §138A-32(e).

When this letter cites an actual or potential conflict of interest under N.C.G.S. 138A-24(e), the conflict shall be recorded in the minutes of the applicable board and duly brought to the attention of the membership by the board's chair as often as necessary to remind all members of the conflict and to help ensure compliance with the Act. (N.C.G.S. §138A-15 (c)).

Finally, the Act mandates that all public servants attend an ethics and lobbying education presentation (N.C.G.S. § 138A-14). Please review the attached document for additional information concerning this requirement.

Please contact our office if you have any questions concerning our evaluation or the ethical standards governing public servants under the Act.

Sincerely,



Jane Steffens, SEI Unit
State Ethics Commission
cc: Joseph Slater
Elizabeth Hawley, Ethics Liaison

Attachment: Ethics Education Guide