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THE TRIANGLE'S CHOICE FOR THE BLACK VOICE

"Celebrating Our 23rd Year"

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Florida A&M gets an at-large berth to the NCAA FCS playoffs.

From auditor to superintendent of the year

By Alex Granados

EDUCATIONNC.ORG

Valerie Bridges never set out to be a superintendent. She never even set out to become an educator. She used to work as an auditor in the state auditor's office. But her mother was a lifelong educator, and even while Bridges was doing her work for the state, she had an eye on the classroom.

"My mother … absolutely loved being in her classroom, and visiting, just seeing the magic happen, each day that I happened by, I would say, 'a little bit longer, a little bit longer,'" Bridges said. Finally, a little bit longer became right now, and Bridges decided to become a teacher. She said it was going to be a decrease in pay, but an increase in joy.

That first step led her on a journey to becoming Edgecombe County Public Schools superintendent in 2017 and then being named North Carolina's 2022 superintendent of the year. Bridges will now be eligible for the national award to be announced next February. "We've been grinding pretty hard in Edgecombe for a long time" she said. "We've never given up.

Please see **SUPERINTENDENT/2A**

Black women: beware this!

Dr. P. Gould

BLACKDOCTOR.ORG

We all know that surgeries can be not only necessary but even life-saving. Yet, other times the reason to go under the knife is taken a little too lightly and the surgery is performed when it doesn't need to be. If you don't have to go under the knife, would you? Here's one surgery that is being performed far too often on Black women.

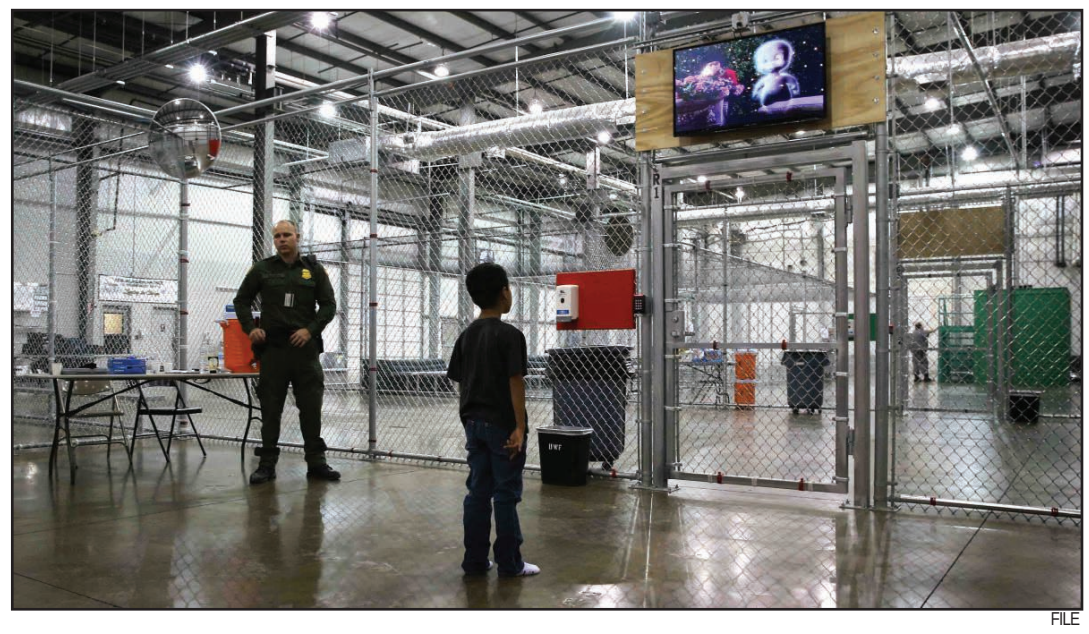
While cancer, fibroids, cysts, or problems with menstruation are all probable reasons for a hysterectomy, studies have shown that this procedure is performed far too many times. Data shows that 1 in 3 women will have her uterus removed before she turns 60. After several studies, the data also shows that many women do not need the hysterectomy they have had. It is the second-most common surgery in reproductive-aged women and yet there are so many that are performed that do not need to be.

Wayne State University and the University of Michigan conducted a study on over 3,400 women who had hysterectomies. They found that 1 in 5 had surgery for conditions such as endometriosis and fibroids. These are benign conditions that usually do not require a hysterectomy for treatment. They also found that 2 out of 5 women who had hysterectomies before they turned 40 were unnecessary.

Dr. Daniel Morgan, one of the authors of the study, said this data calls into question whether surgeons are cutting when they do not need to be. The hysterectomy is a major surgery and brings about a lot of change in a woman's life. She will be unable to conceive after the uterus is taken out. She will no longer menstruate, which can mess with her hormones and cause her to have to use hormone therapy. It is a surgery that should not be performed unless it is absolutely necessary and, in many cases, it is done anyway.

The researchers on these studies found that there are other alternatives to the surgery with certain conditions. For example, the abnormal bleeding that a woman may be experiencing can get an IUD which controls her hormones and oftentimes helps with this. Further research showed that only 12% of the women in the study considered doing this before the surgery and only one-third of those women had gone ahead with it. Over 40% of the women in the study had

Plase see **SURGERY/2A**



FILE

Advocates debate the need for a new juvenile detention center.

Durham town hall raises tension over youth home

By Kylie Marsh

CORRESPONDENT

DURHAM – A back-and-forth between community members and Durham County commissioners that lasted over two hours last week at a virtual town hall about Durham's newly proposed juvenile detention facility left community members feeling unheard.

Local grassroots abolitionist coalition Durham Beyond Policing hosted the "Youth Heal in Communities Not Cages" event to educate residents about the current facility, the proposed expansion from 14 beds to 36, and to hear from the public about better ways to use the allocated $30 million in public dollars.

Meghan McDowell, Winston-Salem State assistant professor of social justice, discussed the County's justification for the planned expansion used in documents from a commissioners' work session in January.

The presentation, made by Moseley Architects, asserts that two North Carolina laws – the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act – necessitate the planned expansion set for 2023.

McDowell argued that juvenile incarceration rates have significantly decreased in the past two decades on both national and state levels, and Durham's most common juvenile infractions are misdemeanors, which don't require secure detention.

Tyler Whittenberg, director of Opportunity for Learning with the Advancement Project, explained key components that lead to healthy youth development and argued that juvenile incarceration does the exact opposite.

After parents told heartbreaking stories about fighting for care for their children, while avoiding the youth carceral system, participants were asked what they'd rather

Please see **TOWN/2A**

Black women make historic political gains but remain underrepresented

By Rebekah Barber

FACING SOUTH

Despite the fact that the first Black and South Asian woman holds the country's second-highest office and more Black women are serving in a presidential cabinet than ever before, Black women remain underrepresented in U.S. politics. And though Black women reached a record high in state legislative representation this year, they are still not represented proportionally compared to their share of the population.

That's among the conclusions of a new report, "Reaching Higher: Black Women in American Politics," from the Higher Heights Leadership Fund, Center for American Women and Politics, and Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics. It found that while Black women make up 7.8% of the U.S. population, they account for less than 5% of office-holders elected to statewide executive offices, Congress, and state legislature, and less than 2% of all statewide elected executive officials. No Black woman has ever been elected governor, and they account for just eight of the mayors in the nation's 100 most populous cities, including Atlanta, New Orleans, and Charlotte.

JOHNNY SILVERCLOUD/FLICKR

Black women are continuing to build political power by running for office in record numbers.

"Even where their numbers have increased, there is still vast opportunity for growth in the number of Black women running and winning at all levels of office," the report says. "The 2022 elections offer an immediate occasion for harnessing Black women's political power both at the ballot box as voters and on the ballot as candidates."

Their numbers are even lower in the South, where only two Black women have ever held statewide executive elected office to date: Jennifer

Please see **WOMEN/2A**

Black, Latinos dispute more credit

By Charlene Crowell

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Although credit accounts enable widely accepted alternatives to cash transactions, the convenience of both debit and credit cards can also become costly when patterns of errors and inaccuracies emerge in credit reports. In 2020, over 300,000 complaints were filed with federal financial regulators concerning credit or consumer reporting.

New research from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau finds that consumers residing in majority minority neighborhoods that are either Black or Latino were more than twice as likely to have disputes appear on their credit reports compared to consumers residing in majority white areas. This finding held true in nearly every credit category reviewed – auto loans, student loans, credit cards, and retail cards between January 2012 and December 2019.

Among these credit categories, auto loans were the most problematic. Consumers in majority Black areas were more than three times as likely to have disputes appear on their credit reports. "Families living in majority Black and Hispanic neighborhoods are far more likely to have disputes of inaccurate information appear on their credit reports," said CFPB Director Rohit Chopra. "Error-ridden credit reports are far too prevalent and may be undermining an equitable recovery."

When credit reporting is rife with errors, these and other failures can restrict consumer access to fair, equitable and affordable credit products. Additionally, as a growing number of employers add credit report reviews to their screening of applicants, erroneous and outdated items can be an obstacle to securing a job, or a reason why access to the most affordable credit is denied.

Beyond or before lawsuits, other consumer-initiated actions can lead to important financial protections. A "credit freeze" can be requested by consumers to only allow access to credit report information with an explicit consumer authorization. While it is designed to prevent credit, loans, and services from being approved in a consumer's name without consent, the Federal Trade Commission warns that its usage can also cause delays in consumers gaining approval for new credit transactions like new accounts. Nor does a credit freeze prevent credit report information by either an existing creditor or their collec-

Please see **CREDIT/3A**

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Durham town hall raises tension over youth home

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see the $30 million be used for? Responses ranged from robust mental health care services, affordable housing, universal pre-K, transportation, and child care. Additional asks were opportunities for arts and athletic recreation, high-speed internet in every home, career readiness and college preparation programs.

"I think it's important to consider that folks are challenging the validity of this center and rebuilding it because they disagree with the logics you are forwarding, and not just because they don't understand it," one participant wrote.

"Have any of you taken the time to look at the plan?" Angela Nunn, director of the current Youth Home, asked. She said the plan includes an attached, non-secure assessment center.

Whittenberg engaged in a back-and-forth with Nunn. "What we're saying is, we do have a choice in how we spend money. We can spend it by preventing those individuals from getting there in the first place," he said.

"I understand that," Nunn interjected, raising her voice once more. She said the planned expansion includes a non-secure assessment center that is open to the public, where families and children in crisis can be introduced into an intervention or preventative program and services.

"Well, could we just have the services, and not the detention?" Whittenberg asked. "And I'll stop, because I'm getting a little too excited now."

Ronda Taylor Bullock, executive director of Working to Extend Antiracist Education, mediated.

"There's a lot of energy in the room because people are passionate, so let's just all take a deep breath," she said.

The commissioners argued that the current facility, which is over 30 years old, is too expensive to repair. "That facility now is so bad. It is sad to see any child in that place, no matter what they've done," Commissioner Brenda Howerton said.

Howerton dismissed comments from viewers asking the money not go toward locking children up, saying that "someone who picks up a gun and murders someone else's child" should be in detention. "If you want to put them back on the street to murder someone else before they have the chance to be healed, is that what you're looking to do? You're confusing me," she continued.

"You think that they shouldn't have help? You just put them back in society and don't take care of their mental health? Something's wrong with that picture for me."

Howerton said crime is increasing. "What I would ask of you is rather than having a public media end up in the newspaper that you sit down with us and have a conversation. And you have not done that."

Commenters responded that the meeting was for them to be heard. "I'm disappointed to see commissioners only looking at whether to lock children up here or somewhere else. The point is that we should be investing money in helping families and kids so they never interact with the carceral system in the first place," another viewer wrote.

Black women make political gains but underrepresented

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Carroll, who was Florida's lieutenant governor from 2011-13, and Jenean Hampton, Kentucky's lieutenant governor from 2015-19. Virginia Lt. Gov.-elect Winsome Sears, a former Marine who co-chairs a group called Black Americans to Re-elect President Trump, will make that three when she takes office in January. Carroll, Hampton, and Sears are all Republicans.

Only two Black women have ever held seats in the U.S. Senate to date — Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois from 1993-99, and current Vice President Kamala Harris, who represented California from 2017-21. A record 13 Black women ran for U.S. Senate in 2020, including environmental justice organizer Marquita Bradshaw in Tennessee, but none of them won. A Black woman has never represented a Southern state in the U.S. Senate, despite the fact that the South is the U.S. region with the most Black residents.

However, 2022 is shaping up to be another record year for Black women seeking Senate seats. In North Carolina, four Black women have already announced their candidacies for the seat being vacated by Republican Richard Burr, who is retiring: former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley, Tryon Town Council member Chrelle Booker, publisher and political commentator Constance Lov Johnson, and former state Sen. Erica D. Smith. Smith also ran for the Democratic nomination for Senate last year, losing the primary to Cal Cunningham, a white man who lost to Republican incumbent Thom Tillis in the general election.

In Florida, U.S. Rep. Val Demmings is running for the Democratic nomination to challenge Republican Sen. Marco Rubio. And, in South Carolina, Spartanburg County Democratic Party Chair Angela Geter and Democratic state Rep. Krystle Matthews have announced they are running for the chance to challenge Republican Sen. Tim Scott, who is also Black.

The number of Black women who are running for U.S. House seats is quickly approaching the 2020 record, which was 117. And, so far, at least five Black women have announced runs for governor, including state Sen. Mia McLeod in South Carolina, educator Deirdre Gilbert in Texas, and U.S. Army veteran Constance Every in Tennessee, who's running to end homelessness and poverty in the state.

But in order to get elected, Black women need more resources. While they are running for office in record numbers, they still aren't getting the financial support they need to win. For example, an analysis of 2020 data by the Center for Responsive Politics found that the 113 active Black women U.S. House candidates raised nearly $81 million in the first three quarters of the year. That compares to nearly $811 million raised by the 379 active white female candidates, and more than $1.5 billion raised by more than 1,000 white male candidates.

Nadia Brown, author of "Sisters in the Statehouse: Black Women and Legislative Decision Making," has noted that Black women are still too often shut out of big-money networks.

"Black women get things done on shoestring budgets," she told The Lily last year. "Imagine what they would be able to do if they were given a fighting chance."

COURTESY

From auditor to superintendent of the year

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We've been bold enough to believe that we really can make a difference in our community and with our kids."

Before coming to Edgecombe, Bridges began her career in education as a high school teacher in Wake County, focusing on accounting and business after getting certified to be a teacher. After a few years, her assistant principal said he had noticed something: Her classroom management skills were great, and her kids loved her. He said she should move into administration. But Bridges balked. "I thought no," she said. "I love my kids. I love the kids. I love the kids. I still do." But her assistant principal wouldn't leave her alone and eventually she relented. She went back to school for a master's degree and back again for a doctorate.

The move to superintendent came with challenges. In the 2016-17 school year, the district had six schools that met or exceeded growth and eight that did not. But under Bridges' leadership, the district moved to 12 schools in 2018-19 that met or exceeded growth and only two that did not. She thinks the numbers would be even better if COVID-19 hadn't put a temporary halt to the accountability measures that determine growth scores.

Matt Smith, principal of Edgecombe Early College High School and the 2019 North Carolina principal of the year, said Bridges has seen her administrators and educators through a lot. "We know her as 'Dr. B.,' a school leader brave enough to tell kids she loves them, strong enough to take on the status quo, and grounded enough to keep kids and equity at the center of all our work here in Edgecombe County Public Schools," he said. "She is the kind of leader who runs toward the fire. Our entire Edgecombe community trusts Dr. Bridges. Time and time again, through the daily grind, two 500-year floods, the pandemic, Dr. Bridges has been our anchor, our rock, our compass. Her moral courage and equity-centered leadership inspire all of us."

As superintendent of the year, Bridges hopes to continue to shape the future of education by using the bully pulpit of her position to shine light on important educational issues like the state's testing and accountability model that grades schools using a formula of 80% academic achievement and 20% academic growth. (Achievement is basically determined by how well students do on tests while growth shows students' improvement over time.)

"The testing model and the calculations used, the 80/20, is still not appropriate," she said. "I think every superintendent has said that. We say growth matters, so why would growth be 20%?"

She also mentioned teacher pay and the pathways to becoming a teacher as other issues she wants to highlight. "There are a number of issues that are concerning in education, and I do think that when you have a platform, you use your voice to share those," she said.

One surgery is performed too much on Black women

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no alternative treatments before undergoing the knife.

While medical records do not show if these women were given options for alternative treatments and refused them, the fact still remains that more women are having this surgery than they should.

Common questions you should ask before your hysterectomy:

* What exactly is causing my pain? Sometimes the reason will not be entirely clear to the doctor and, if time and your insurance allows more research to be done, you should investigate it.

* Are there are other tests that can be done to make the diagnosis more apparent? The decision whether to have these tests or not should be yours and should be balanced with the side effects and cost of the tests.

* What are the consequences to my health if you do not have surgery, either at all or at this time? For nonlife-threatening problems, one option is always to do nothing. However, doing nothing often means more frequent visits to your doctor to monitor your problem.

* What are the nonsurgical alternative therapies available to treat my condition? For a vast number of conditions, there are usually alternatives of varying degrees of effectiveness.

* What is your experience doing the operation that has been proposed? Of course, there will be referrals to a specialist or a team of specialists to do your procedure. Knowing the expertise of anyone who will potentially lead your surgery is important.

Whatever you decide, your main goal is to be informed. Stay in constant communication with your doctor and know your options – good, bad or indifferent.

Pilot program for sexual assault nurses funded in NC

By Kate Martin

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

When people are raped in North Carolina, the best person to care for them and collect forensic evidence may not be at the nearest hospital. Specially trained medical professionals, called Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, or SANE nurses, do not work at every hospital. Rural areas are far less likely to have these nurses on staff than urban areas, and no state agency tracks where they work, according to a Carolina Public Press investigation earlier this year.

A $125,000 appropriation in the state budget will support a pilot project for SANE nurse funding in Cumberland County. State Rep. Billy Richardson, D-Cumberland, said the pilot project funding is a first step to "see what works and what doesn't work before we implement it statewide. I feel confident as we learn and grow from this, we will put more resources into it because it's needed," Richardson said.

A SANE nurse certification requires a person to have been a nurse for at least two years, complete dozens of hours of training and clinical work, and then pass a written exam by the International Association of Forensic Nurses. Many nurses around the state have completed some training or have attended training with their hospital about how to treat sexual assault survivors but lack the full credential.

Rape Crisis Volunteers of Cumberland County will

Please see NURSES/3A

Unfunded nursing home mandates will worsen historic staffing crisis

STAFF REPORTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living, said two provisions in the Build Back Better Act will have a devastating impact on nursing homes and could force thousands more facilities to further limit admissions or possibly close their doors.

The provisions, one that would require nursing homes to have a registered nurse on staff 24 hours a day and another that would require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a study on minimum staffing ratios and implement the regulations within one year, are unfunded mandates that, conservatively, would cost the nursing homes industry billions of dollars a year and require hiring more than 150,000 new caregivers.

"We strongly support having a RN on staff in nursing homes 24 hours a day, as we originally proposed in our reform agenda earlier this year. However, current data shows that the nursing homes are facing the worst job loss among all health care providers. We've lost 221,000 jobs since the beginning of the pandemic, and recovery is a long way away. Nursing home providers are doing all they can to attract and retain new workers, but the applicants simply aren't there. The provisions in this bill do nothing to help us strengthen our workforce and will only force thousands of nursing homes to further limit the number of residents they can serve," AHCA/NCAL President and CEO Mark Parkinson said.

The AHCA/NCAL, representing more than 14,000 nursing homes and long-term care facilities across the country that provide care to approximately 5 million people each year, estimates that if the HHS study found that nursing homes need to increase clinical and direct care staff by 25%, it would require hiring more than 150,000 RNs, LPNs and certified nursing assistants CNSs, costing $10.7 billion per year. Current requirements mandate that nursing homes have a RN on staff eight hours a day. Under the proposed mandate in the legislation, the AHCA/NCAL estimates it would require hiring 21,000 more nurses, cost-

Please see CRISIS/4A

Black and Latino consumers dispute credit reports double that of white people

Continued from page 1A

tion agents.

Another consumer protection is known as a "fraud alert" on credit report files. Initially, this provision offers an initial one-year period in which new credit accounts at businesses are required to verify the consumer's identity before opening new credit. Additionally, consumers who have been victims of identity theft are entitled to an extended seven-year fraud alert.

Beyond fraud alerts and credit freezes, under FCRA consumers also have a right to:

* One free disclosure every 12 months upon request from each nationwide credit bureau and from nationwide specialty consumer reporting agencies

* Be told if information in credit files has been used against you. Anyone who uses a credit report or another type of consumer report to deny your application for credit, insurance, or employment – or to take another adverse action against you – must tell you, and must give you the name, address, and phone number of the agency that provided the information

* A 30-day window for consumer reporting agencies to correct or delete inaccurate, incomplete, or unverifiable information. However, a consumer reporting agency may continue to report information it has verified as accurate.

States can and do offer additional consumer protections through the offices of state attorneys general. As a rule, like CFPB, these state offices accept online complaints that can be investigated and when warranted, prosecuted. In some instances, joint and collaborative prosecutions connect federal and state offices in the pursuit of consumer enforcement actions.

Now, as the holiday season brings increased spending, consumers would be wise to remain alert to credit usage and inaccuracies.

Charlene Crowell is a senior fellow with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.

ALICIA CARTER/CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

A sexual assault nurse examiner opens a rape kit at the Solace Center in Raleigh.

Pilot program for sexual assault nurses funded in NC

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oversee the pilot project. Executive Director Deanne Gerdes said she alerted her state legislators to the lack of SANE nurses at the local hospital, and they discussed what to do. In its response to CPP's survey, Cape Fear Valley Medical Center said last November that it had zero nurses with a SANE certification but later clarified that it had eight people who had taken some training.

Apart from the pilot project, the state budget also funds $125,000 for Rape Crisis Volunteers of Cumberland County's domestic violence services, and $50,000 for renovations for its Phoenix Center. "We literally have a family of squirrels living in the walls of the counseling room," Gerdes said.

For the SANE nurse pilot program, Gerdes said she's considering how best to use the money, whether it is direct funding for training SANE nurses or paying for a SANE nurse coordinator.

"I think that's a great conversation to have with Cape Fear Valley and other stakeholders in the sexual assault community," Gerdes said.

While any nurse or doctor can complete a sexual assault kit, which collects DNA and evidence of an assault, SANE nurses are trained to know where to look for bruises and scrapes. After dozens of hours of practice and training, they also know how to ask delicate questions about what happened so they know where else to look for harm. They provide medicine to prevent pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.

State Sen. Kirk deViere, D-Cumberland, who also pushed for the funding, said throughout his talks with law enforcement, advocates for sexual assault survivors and prosecutors, "SANE nurses continue to come up." Rape Crisis Volunteers of Cumberland County has "always struggled for resources," deViere said, noting that the legislation helps with that problem "but also creates a structure around training for SANE nurses."

SANE nurses have also stood as a bulwark against a victim being charged for the exam. It's illegal in North Carolina to charge a rape victim for his examination, but sometimes hospitals do it anyway. A bill unanimously passed by the state House would fine any hospital that bills a victim for his rape kit up to $25,000 per occurrence. House Bill 626, authored by Richardson and Rep. Edward Goodwin, R-Chowan, will be considered by the state Senate next year.

Nationally, hospitals have trouble retaining nurses in their SANE programs. Just about everywhere the nurses are in short supply, according to a 2016 six-state study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Part of the reason is retention: Serving a sexual assault victim can be emotionally difficult, and a SANE nurse might be the only person with that credential in a hospital — potentially leading to an erratic work schedule and heavy workload.

And for victims who seek a qualified nurse, their wait can be measured in hours or even days. Some have crossed state lines to reach a SANE nurse, previous reporting by CPP has shown.

For the hours a SANE nurse might spend on a patient, hospitals can receive up to $800 for each rape kit performed from the state's Rape Victim Assistance Program if they send in an itemized receipt. State records show not every hospital asks the state for reimbursement. Senate Bill 561 filed earlier this year would have increased state funding to $1,400 per sexual assault exam, but the bill died in a committee.

"I would want to reintroduce the bill at the appropriate time in the future," said bill sponsor, state Sen. Natasha Marcus, D-Mecklenburg. "We shouldn't give up."

Nursing home mandates will worsen staffing crisis

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ing $2.5 billion a year.

Phil Fogg, president and CEO of Marquis Companies, which operates over 20 long-term care facilities, said if Congress enacts these provisions without the necessary resources and recruitment programs, it could have a devastating impact on nursing homes and the residents they serve across the country.

"The workforce and economic crisis long-term care providers are already experiencing is unprecedented. A lack of qualified workers is forcing providers to limit their admissions and, in some cases, close their doors permanently. Providers simply cannot attract more caregivers to our profession and meet the requirements of these mandates without financial support from Congress," Fogg said.

"We all share a common goal and that is to strengthen our workforce and provide the best possible care for our residents. But these unfunded mandates could further exacerbate the challenges we face and ultimately limit access to care for millions. We are eager to work hand-in-hand with lawmakers to find meaningful solutions that will ensure seniors continue to receive the highest quality care and caregivers have access to good-paying, rewarding jobs," said Len Russ, operator and administrator of Bayberry Care Center.

The 'great resignation' began before the pandemic

By Ian O. Williamson

THE CONVERSATION

Finding good employees has always been a challenge, but these days it's harder than ever. And it is unlikely to improve anytime soon.

The so-called quit rate – the share of workers who voluntarily leave their jobs – hit a new record of 3% in September, according to the latest data available from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. The rate was highest in the leisure and hospitality sector, where 6.4% of workers quit their jobs. In all, 20.2 million workers left their employers from May through September.

Companies are feeling the effects. In August, a survey found that 73% of 380 were having difficulty attracting employees – three times the share that said so the previous year. And 70% expect this difficulty to persist into 2022. Observers have blamed a wide variety of factors for all the turnover, from fear of contracting COVID-19 by mixing with co-workers on the job to paltry wages and benefits being offered.

While the current resignation behavior may seem like a new trend, data shows employee turnover has been rising steadily for the past decade and may simply be the new normal employers are going to have to get used to. The U.S. – alongside other advanced economies – has been moving away from a focus on productive sectors like manufacturing to a service-based economy for decades. In recent years, the service sector accounted for about 86% of all employment in the U.S. and 79% of all economic growth.

That change has been seismic for employers. A majority of the jobs in service-based industries require only generalizable occupational skills such as competencies in computing and communications that are often easily transportable across companies. This is true across a wide range of professions, from accountants and engineers to truck drivers and customer services representatives. As a result, in service-based economies, it is relatively easy for employees to move between companies and maintain their productivity.

And thanks to information technology and social media, it has never been easier for employees to find out about new job opportunities anywhere in the world. The growing prevalence of remote working also means that in some cases employees will no longer need to physically relocate to start a new job. Thus, the barriers and transition costs employees incur when switching employers have been reduced.

Greater options and lower costs to move mean that employees can be more selective and focus on picking jobs that best fit their personal needs and desires. What people want from work is inherently shaped by their cultural values and life situation. The U.S. labor market is expected to become far more diverse going forward in terms of gender, ethnicity and age. Thus, employers that cannot provide greater flexibility and variety in their working environment will struggle to attract and retain workers. Employers now have a greater obligation than in the past to convince existing and would-be employees why they should stay or join their organizations. And there is no evidence to suggest this trend will change going forward.

It has been estimated that the cost to the employer of replacing a departing employee is on average 122% of that employee's annual salary in terms of finding and training a replacement.

Thus, there is a large incentive for businesses to adapt to the new labor market conditions and develop innovative approaches to keeping workers happy and in their jobs.

A May survey found that 54% of employees surveyed from around the world would consider leaving their job if they were not afforded some form of flexibility in where and when they work.

Given the heightened priority employees place on finding a job that fits their preferences, companies need to adopt a more holistic approach to the types of rewards they provide. It's also important that they tailor the types of financial, social and developmental incentives and opportunities they provide to individual employees' preferences. It's not just about paying workers more. There are even examples of companies providing employees the choice of simply being paid in a cryptocurrency like bitcoin as an inducement.

Companies should also plan on high employee mobility to be endemic and reframe how they approach managing their workers. One way to do this is by investing deeply in external relationships that help ensure consistent access to high-quality talent. This can include enhancing the relationships they have with educational institutions and former employees.

For example, many organizations have adopted alumni programs that specifically recruit former employees to rejoin. These former employees are often less expensive to recruit, bring access to needed human capital and possess both an understanding of an organization's processes and an appreciation of the organization's culture. The quit rate is likely to stay elevated for some time to come. The sooner employers accept that and adapt, the better they'll be at managing the new normal.

Two men convicted of killing Malcolm X are exonerated in court

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Two of the three men convicted of killing the civil rights activist Malcolm X were exonerated in a Manhattan court last week. A judge dismissed the convictions of Muhammad Aziz and Khalil Islam after a 22-month investigation unveiled new evidence of the men's innocence.

The judge determined that authorities withheld some evidence that might have cleared them during the investigation. "The event that has brought us to court today should never have occurred," Aziz told the court, according to The Associated Press. "I am an 83-year-old man who was victimized by the criminal justice system."

District Attorney Cy Vance and lawyers representing the two men announced they would ask the court to "vacate the wrongful convictions" of Aziz and Islam — a move that debunks the official account about the assassination of the fiery orator who was murdered onstage in 1965 in a hail of bullets in front of hundreds of people, including his daughters and pregnant wife.

Aziz and Islam, members of the Nation of Islam, were sentenced to life in prison a year later alongside Mujahid Abdul Halim, then known as Talmadge Hayer and Thomas Hagan. While Halim confessed to the murder during the trial, he testified that neither Aziz nor Islam was involved. But he declined to name the men who had joined him in the attack.

Meanwhile, Islam, then known as Thomas 15X Johnson, and Aziz, then known as Norman 3X Butler, always maintained their innocence. Halim eventually gave the names of four men who he said were his accomplices in 1978. But his testimony failed to persuade officials to reopen the investigation of the murder and a judge rejected a motion to vacate the convictions.

Halim was released in 2010 after spending more than 40 years in prison. Islam was released in 1987 and died in 2009. Aziz, who was released on parole in 1985, fought to clear his name with the help of the Innocence Project.

In 2020, a documentary called "Who Killed Malcolm X?" raised a slew of new questions, ultimately prompting Vance to launch a new investigation. "The day of the murder, which was a Sunday morning, I was laying over the couch with my [injured] foot up and I heard it over the radio," Aziz remembers in Who Killed Malcolm X?

According to the Innocence Project, "In addition to multiple alibi witnesses, a doctor who treated Aziz at Jacobi Hospital in the Bronx just hours before Malcolm's murder took the stand in Aziz's defense." Over the last 22 months, Vance's team has unearthed FBI documents that would have cast doubt on the involvement of Aziz and Islam. That evidence was available at the time of the trial but was withheld from the defense and prosecution.

Erica Smith ends U.S. Senate bid, moves to replace Butterfield

By Bryan Anderson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — Democratic former state Sen. Erica Smith announced Tuesday that she has ended her candidacy for U.S. Senate and will now launch a congressional bid to replace Democratic Rep. G.K. Butterfield.

She will compete against state Rep. James Gailliard, who entered the race Monday night, and likely face state Sen. Don Davis, who has filed paperwork with the Federal Election Commission to run for the redrawn congressional district in northeastern North Carolina.

Smith, a Northampton County resident who has twice failed to secure the Democratic Party's nomination for U.S. Senate, said in an interview with The Associated Press that she is confident she can win in a community she grew up in.

"I am more centered in the community, having represented more counties, grown up solely in this eastern district, and Don Davis does not currently live in the congressional district," Smith said, adding she has represented half of the 18 counties that are at least partially included in the redrawn 2nd Congressional District, while Davis represents just two.

Davis currently serves voters in Pitt and Greene counties. Kevin Holst, an adviser to Davis, said the lawmaker now lives within the congressional district.

"I've filed the necessary paperwork and will have more to share on my future plans after I take time to reflect and have further discussions with my family over the Thanksgiving holiday," Davis wrote in an emailed statement.

Smith filed for the congressional seat last week but planned to formally kick off her campaign Tuesday. Gailliard, a Nash County Democrat who lives in the new congressional district, declared his candidacy Monday.

He told the AP he plans to carve out a moderate lane and present himself as the likeliest Democrat to win a general election in what will likely be the closest U.S. House race in the state.

"I'm not a far-left liberal Dem, and this is not a far-left, liberal-drawn district, so we're going to need a moderate candidate to get us across the finish line and I feel like I'm that candidate," Gailliard said.

It's possible the Republican-drawn congressional and legislative maps could get struck down amid legal challenges accusing the GOP of drawing boundaries that were partisan and racial gerrymanders.

Butterfield cited the shifting makeup of his district as the driving force behind his decision not to seek reelection. His district went from Democratic-leaning to a toss-up, as the share of Black voters dropped.

Smith said she would pursue a congressional run even if the congressional map gets struck down in court, as did Gailliard. She hopes her modest upbringing, awareness of higher prices people are paying at grocery stores and gas pumps, and personal struggles affording medical care for her late son will resonate with potential voters.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

OPEN HOUSE
C3 presents Sip & See open house for brides, grooms, etc., Nov. 28, 4-7 p.m., 5291 Capital Blvd.

DURHAM CHAMBER
* "Take No Bull: Breaking Barriers..." women's series is Dec. 2, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., virtually. Register at members.durhamchamber.org.

LAUNCH PARTY
The Loading Dock will host its grand opening and holiday market Dec. 4, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 525 S. White St., Wake Forest.

RALEIGH CHAMBER
* Dec. 9, 5 p.m. – Elected Officials Holiday Reception
* Dec. 10, 8:30 a.m. – Coffee with Lori Jones. Register for both at raleighchamber.org.

BONUSES
Fifth Third Bank will pay its full-time employees a special bonus of $1,250 for hanging tough through the ongoing pandemic. Part-time employees will get $625.

OPENINGS:
* SureStay Plus Hotel by Best Western Durham Medical Park is now open for busy and tired travelers at 3710 Hillsborough Road. Visit BestWestern.com.
* Five Star restaurant will open a new location at American Tobacco Campus in spring 2022.

Send business briefs to info@triangletribune.com.

COVID shots for kids help prevent new variants

By Laura Unger
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Cadell Walker rushed to get her 9-year-old daughter Solome vaccinated against COVID-19 — not just to protect her but to help stop the coronavirus from spreading and spawning even more dangerous variants.

"Love thy neighbor is something that we really do believe, and we want to be good community members and want to model that thinking for our daughter," said the 40-year-old Louisville mom, who recently took Solome to a local middle school for her shot. "The only way to really beat COVID is for all of us collectively to work together for the greater good."

Scientists agree. Each infection — whether in an adult in Yemen or a kid in Kentucky — gives the virus another opportunity to mutate. Protecting a new, large chunk of the population anywhere in the world limits those opportunities.

That effort got a lift with 28 million U.S. kids 5 to 11 years old now eligible for child-sized doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Moves elsewhere, like Austria's recent decision to require all adults to be vaccinated and even the U.S. authorizing booster shots for all adults on Friday, help by further reducing the chances of new infection.

Vaccinating kids also means reducing silent spread, since most have no or mild symptoms when they contract the virus. When the virus spreads unseen, scientists say, it also goes unabated. And as more people contract it, the odds of new variants rise.

David O'Connor, a virology expert at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, likens infections to "lottery tickets that we're giving the virus." The jackpot? A variant even more dangerous than the contagious delta currently circulating.

"The fewer people who are infected, the less lottery tickets it has and the better off we're all going to be in terms of generating the variants," he said, adding that variants are even more likely to emerge in people with weakened immune systems who harbor the virus for a long time.

Researchers disagree on how much kids have influenced the course of the pandemic. Early research suggested they didn't contribute much to viral spread. But some experts say children played a significant role this year spreading contagious variants such as alpha and delta.

Getting kids vaccinated could make a real difference going forward, according to estimates by the COVID-19 Scenario Modeling Hub, a collection of university and medical research organizations that consolidates models of how the pandemic may unfold. The hub's latest estimates show that for this November through March 12, 2022, vaccinating 5- to 11-year-olds would avert about 430,000 COVID cases in the overall U.S. population if no new variant arose. If a variant 50% more transmissible than delta showed up in late fall, 860,000 cases would be averted, "a big impact," said project co-leader Katriona Shea, of Pennsylvania State University.

Delta remains dominant for now, accounting for more than 99% of analyzed coronavirus specimens in the U.S. Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, an infectious disease expert at Johns Hopkins University, said it may be intrinsically more infectious, or it may be evading at least in part the protection people get from vaccines.