



North Carolina General Assembly  
Senate Democratic Leader

SENATOR DANIEL T. BLUE, JR.  
14TH DISTRICT

OFFICE ADDRESS: 1129 LEGISLATIVE BUILDING  
16 W. JONES STREET  
RALEIGH, NC 27601-2808

TELEPHONE: (919) 733-5752  
(919) 754-3307 FAX

EMAIL: dan.blue@ncleg.net

DISTRICT: WAKE COUNTY

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS/BASE BUDGET  
APPROPRIATIONS ON JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY  
FINANCE  
JUDICIARY  
REDISTRICTING AND ELECTIONS  
RULES AND OPERATIONS OF THE SENATE  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

June 16, 2020

President Pro Tempore Phil Berger  
Legislative Building  
Room 2007  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

Senator Berger,

In March, at the start of this pandemic, Mr. Coble wrote a letter to General Assembly members and staff that, "concern for your health and safety ...demands our attention...Our hope is that, by erring on the side of initiative and taking action, this note will provide reassurance to you in the face of some uncertainty."

Despite those assurances, on April 1, Mr. Coble confirmed that a staff member arrived to work with COVID-19 symptoms and later tested positive for the virus.

That announcement that COVID-19 had reached the General Assembly came with further assurance from Mr. Coble that he was "taking aggressive action to contain the spread of the virus."

On May 28, Mr. Coble updated members and staff on new cleaning measures, stressing that, "we will continue to make sure that you have a safe, secure and clean working environment."

On Thursday, June 11, Senator Terry Van Duyn wrote an email to Mr. Coble expressing her concerns with the lax working guidelines, noting:

- My temperature is taken in the morning by a staff member that is not masked.
- The Sergeants-at-Arms who distribute masks do not wear masks themselves.
- The sanitizer stations are frequently empty or not working well.



- Committee room seating in the Legislative Building clearly does not allow for social distancing.
- Groups of more than 25 persons are routine, with most people going unmasked.

Senator Van Duyn added that, "Many of our members and staff are clearly in high risk categories for dire outcomes...I fear this is a disregard for the safety of staff and the members will result in unnecessary illness."

Mr. Coble responded to Senator Van Duyn, stating, "First, let me say that we have taken the threat of the Coronavirus very seriously and there has been no disregard for anyone's health or safety."

On Monday, June 15, General Assembly staff and members arrived to work to find that temperature screenings had been suspended without notice or explanation.

As of Monday, North Carolina reported at least 45,113 cases of COVID-19, 1,140 confirmed deaths from the virus, and at least 797 people hospitalized. People 65 and older account for 82 percent of deaths in our state.

Mr. Coble's words of assurances are directly contradicted by his actions. The decision to end daily health screenings two days after Senator Van Duyn shared her concerns is alarming and warrants a public explanation.

Mr. Coble's actions call into question the sincerity of his words to staff and members that he has "taken the threat of the Coronavirus very seriously."

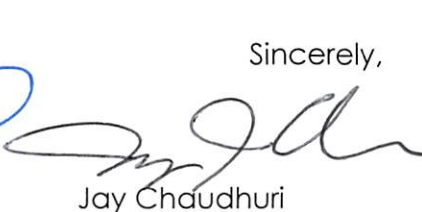
Additionally, leadership has taken unexplained actions to end health guidelines from state and federal experts, including an unannounced end to social distancing seating for members in the Senate chamber.

We ask Mr. Coble to explain his actions and to reinstate daily temperature checks immediately. We also ask that social distancing seating in the Senate chamber be restored for the remainder of session.

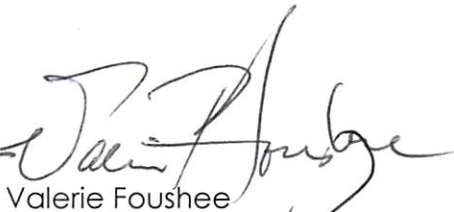
Sincerely,



Dan Blue



Jay Chaudhuri



Valerie Foushee



Ben Clark



Toby Fitch



Natasha Marcus

Don Davis

Paul Lowe

Gladys Robinson

Jeff Jackson

Mike Woodard

Wiley Nickel

Sam Searcy

Joyce Waddell

Kirk deViere

Harper Peterson

Michael Garrett

Mujtaba Mohammed

Terry Van Duyn

Natalie Murdock