

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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HOUSE BILL 518

Short Title: Waive Marr. Lic. Fee/Pre. Counseling/Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Hilton, Tillis (Primary Sponsors); Barnhart, Boylan, Brubaker, Cleveland, Folwell, Frye, Gillespie, Gulley, Holloway, Johnson, Justus, Killian, McElraft, McGee, Neumann, Samuelson, Steen, Thomas, and Walend.

Referred to: Appropriations.

March 7, 2007

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO WAIVE THE FEE FOR A MARRIAGE LICENSE FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO RECEIVE PREMARITAL COUNSELING AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 51-8 reads as rewritten:

"§ 51-8. License issued by register of deeds.

(a) Every register of deeds shall, upon proper application, issue a license for the marriage of any two persons who are able to answer the questions regarding age, marital status, and intention to marry, and, based on the answers, the register of deeds determines the persons are authorized to be married in accordance with the laws of this State. In making a determination as to whether or not the parties are authorized to be married under the laws of this State, the register of deeds may require the applicants for the license to marry to present certified copies of birth certificates or such other evidence as the register of deeds deems necessary to the determination. The register of deeds may administer an oath to any person presenting evidence relating to whether or not parties applying for a marriage license are eligible to be married pursuant to the laws of this State. Each applicant for a marriage license shall provide on the application the applicant's social security number. If an applicant does not have a social security number and is ineligible to obtain one, the applicant shall present a statement to that effect, sworn to or affirmed before an officer authorized to administer oaths. Upon presentation of a sworn or affirmed statement, the register of deeds shall issue the license, provided all other requirements are met, and retain the statement with the register's copy of the license. The register of deeds shall not issue a marriage license unless all of the requirements of this section have been met.

1 (b) As an incentive and in an effort to strengthen the marital relationship,
2 marriage license applicants who have received premarital counseling shall be entitled to
3 a waiver of the marriage license fee established in G.S. 161-10(a)(2). To receive the
4 waiver, applicants shall submit documentation to the register of deeds that they have
5 received premarital counseling at least 15 days before applying for a marriage license.
6 Applicants may submit documentation of premarital counseling from a priest, minister,
7 rabbi, other clergy of a recognized religious denomination, a licensed marriage and
8 family therapist, or a qualified mental health provider. Premarital counseling shall
9 include discussions of any issues relevant to sustaining a marriage as well as the
10 following topics:

11 (1) A discussion about the seriousness of marriage.

12 (2) Communication of the fact that marriage is intended to be a lifelong
13 commitment.

14 (3) A discussion about the various factors that lead to marital difficulties.

15 (4) A discussion regarding the need to seek marital counseling in times of
16 marital difficulty.

17 For purposes of this subsection, the phrase 'recognized religious denomination' shall
18 include nondenominational ministries, interdenominational and ecumenical
19 organizations, and other entities whose principal purpose is the study or advancement of
20 religion.

21 (c) The register of deeds shall submit to the Office of State Budget and
22 Management documentation of the total amount of the waivers granted. On a monthly
23 basis, the Office of State Budget and Management shall forward to the county register
24 of deeds, the State Treasurer, and the Department of Administration the respective
25 amounts that would have gone to the county general fund pursuant to G.S. 161-10(a),
26 the Children's Trust Fund pursuant to G.S. 161-11.1, and the Domestic Violence Center
27 Fund pursuant to G.S. 161-11.2, had the fee specified in G.S. 161-10(a)(2) not been
28 waived. Any cost in excess of the funding appropriated for this purpose shall be
29 allocated from and paid out of the Contingency and Emergency Fund."

30 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 161-10(a)(2) reads as rewritten:

31 "(2) Marriage Licenses. – For issuing a license fifty dollars
32 (\$50.00);(\$50.00), except that the fee shall be waived for issuing a
33 license to applicants who have received and submitted documentation
34 of premarital counseling pursuant to G.S. 51-8; for issuing a delayed
35 certificate with one certified copy twenty dollars (\$20.00); and for a
36 proceeding for correction of an application, license or certificate, with
37 one certified copy ten dollars (\$10.00)."

38 **SECTION 3.(a)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office
39 of State Budget and Management the sum of one hundred fifty thousand dollars
40 (\$150,000) for the 2007-2008 fiscal year and the sum of one hundred fifty thousand
41 dollars (\$150,000) for the 2008-2009 fiscal year for the purpose of reimbursing a local
42 register of deeds for waivers granted on marriage license fees to marriage license
43 applicants submitting documentation of premarital counseling to the register of deeds in
44 accordance with G.S. 51-8.

1 **SECTION 3.(b)** The Office of State Budget and Management shall track
2 and report on the number of waivers granted pursuant to G.S. 51-8 and shall submit the
3 report on a quarterly basis to the Fiscal Research Division.

4 **SECTION 4.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2007.