

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2017**

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**HOUSE BILL 919**

Short Title:   Pembroke Optometry School Funds. (Public)

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Sponsors:    Representative Brenden Jones.

*For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.*

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Referred to:   Appropriations

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April 26, 2017

1                                   A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR A SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY AT THE  
3 UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT PEMBROKE.

4           Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke serves as the anchor  
5 institution for economic development for the southeastern region of North Carolina; and

6           Whereas, an already economically depressed rural area, southeastern North Carolina  
7 was recently ravaged by Hurricane Matthew and its record-breaking rainfall, during which the  
8 1,000-year flood event devastated people, infrastructure, businesses, schools, and entire  
9 communities; and

10          Whereas, Robeson County ranks 100 out of 100 North Carolina counties for overall  
11 health outcomes, the median household income is less than \$30,000, 96% of school-age  
12 children receive free or reduced lunch, and 44% of children live in poverty; and

13          Whereas, a School of Optometry located at the University of North Carolina at  
14 Pembroke would be an economic driver for this region of the State; and

15          Whereas, North Carolina does not have an optometry school and has historically  
16 provided support to North Carolina optometry students who are trained out of state; and

17          Whereas, the need for and utilization of optometry services has increased and will  
18 continue to do so, not only as the general population ages, but also as the population of the  
19 State of North Carolina continues to grow at an increasing rate. Furthermore, federal and State  
20 programs requiring assessment and intervention for early childhood eye and vision health will  
21 place a greater need on the current State optometry profession; and

22          Whereas, most optometrists are concentrated in more urban areas of the State, thus a  
23 school in a rural setting can prepare students to meet both the urban and rural practice need;  
24 and

25          Whereas, a School of Optometry at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke  
26 would make optometric services more widely available to many low-income and elderly  
27 citizens in the University's immediate service area who currently do not have access to such  
28 services; and

29          Whereas, the optometry workforce does not reflect the racial diversity of North  
30 Carolina's population; and

31          Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke is "North Carolina's  
32 Historically American Indian University" and has been identified by U.S. News and World  
33 Report as the most diverse regional university in the South; and



1           Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke has strong rural and other  
2 health care initiatives in place through programs in nursing, social work, counseling, health  
3 administration, and athletic training; and

4           Whereas, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke is located in close  
5 proximity to numerous health care systems as well as the Fort Bragg military installation, thus  
6 students at a University of North Carolina at Pembroke School of Optometry would enjoy  
7 abundant clinical opportunities; Now, therefore,

8 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

9           **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of  
10 Governors of The University of North Carolina the sum of three million eight hundred  
11 seventy-five thousand dollars (\$3,875,000) for the 2017-2018 fiscal year for advance planning,  
12 design fees, and other preconstruction activities associated with the construction of a facility to  
13 house the School of Optometry at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

14           **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2017.