



May 27, 2021

**Transmitted via Electronic Mail**

The Honorable Tim Moore  
Speaker of the House  
North Carolina General Assembly

The Honorable Phil Berger  
President Pro Tempore  
North Carolina General Assembly

**RE: NC Program Evaluation Division**

Dear Speaker Moore and Senator Berger:

On behalf of the 8,000 members of the American Evaluation Association -- 160 of which reside in North Carolina -- I write to express concern and disappointment about the North Carolina General Assembly's recent [actions](#) to eliminate the non-partisan, well-regarded, and independent [Program Evaluation Division](#). The elimination of this unit in North Carolina means the state is one of just 10 in the country without a legislative evaluation and performance auditing function.

The American Evaluation Association is a non-profit professional association of experts in program evaluation across the country, including officials who work for state and federal legislatures. The American Evaluation Association provides resources to federal, state, local and tribal agencies that support capacity building and effective analysis of government programs and operations. For example, our "[Evaluation Roadmap](#) for a More Effective Government" provides a framework for governments to consider in designing effective evaluation functions that are built on independence, strong analytic approaches and methods, appropriate scope, clear evaluation policies and procedures, and appropriate resources.

Implicit in responsible evaluation activities is a compelling alignment with the principle of transparency. The recent decision to eliminate the non-partisan Program Evaluation Division of the North Carolina Legislature without public comment or notice is particularly troubling; we encourage the General Assembly to review the decision and weigh the consequence of losing the benefit of high-quality, non-partisan, objective analysis and reviews of programs and services in North Carolina.

Regardless of whether the General Assembly determines to re-institute the Program Evaluation Division, we strongly encourage the North Carolina Legislative Branch to devise a mechanism and approach through which evaluation activities can be conducted objectively. This includes by conducting evaluation in a manner that satisfies the bipartisan principles outlined by the [U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking](#) as well as the bipartisan [approaches](#) adopted for evaluation in other governmental institutions.

*RE: AEA Letter on NC Program Evaluation Division (5/27/2021)*

Thank you for your service to the people of North Carolina as an elected representative. We hope you will agree that the people of the state deserve objective evaluation and assessment in determining whether the state's programs and services deliver expected benefits to the public and whether their taxpayer dollars are used effectively.

Respectfully,

Tom Grayson, Ph.D.  
AEA President, 2021

Attachment

CC: Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, Senate President  
Sen. Kathy Harrington, Senate Majority Leader  
Sen. Dan Blue, Senate Minority Leader  
Rep. John Bell IV, House Majority Leader  
Rep. Robert Reives II, House Minority Leader

Sen. Brent Jackson, Co-Chair Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Rep. Cecil Brockman, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Rep. Becky Carney, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Sen. Don Davis, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Rep. Ted Davis, Jr., Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Sen. Kirk deViere, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Sen. Chuck Edwards, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Sen. Carl Ford, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Rep. Julia Howard, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Rep. Pat B. Hurley, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Rep. Marvin Lucas, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Sen. Paul Newton, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Rep. Jason Saine, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee  
Sen. Joyce Waddell, Member Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee



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## Statement on the Role of Independent State Evaluation Offices

The following is a statement issued by the American Evaluation Association President in response to recent efforts to limit the independence of evaluation activities and offices in multiple states across the country:

Evaluating government programs and services is an important strategy for improving efficiency and outcomes for the people government serves. In recent years, many states have opted to expand capacity in evaluation and evidence building, particularly with a focus on independence and increasing rigor. The American Evaluation Association recognizes the important role evaluation can play, and salutes the activities at the state level.

The American Evaluation Association's "[Evaluation Roadmap](#) for a More Effective Government" provides a framework for federal, state, local, and tribal governments to consider in designing effective evaluation functions. In most cases, robust evaluation capacity in multiple branches of government is optimal for addressing the variety of policy-relevant questions that may emerge from elected officials and program managers. Among the principles recommended by the American Evaluation Association for governmental evaluation is independence, meaning the evaluation organization, unit, and staff must retain control of evaluation questions, design, methods, and findings. Evaluation activities can and should be independent even when political processes identify potential topics, establish budgets, and guide priorities.

Efforts to formalize evaluation practice across many states align with activities in the federal government to expand capacity for evidence-based policymaking. With the unanimous recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking in 2017 and the enactment of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act; P.L. 115-435), evaluation capacity building and infrastructure has proceeded across the country on a recognized bipartisan and professional trajectory.

The members of the American Evaluation Association are available to support the establishment and growth of evaluation capacity in Executive Branch and Legislative Branch operations.

*The American Evaluation Association is a professional association of evaluators. Evaluation involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies, personnel, products and organizations to improve their effectiveness. AEA's mission is to improve evaluation practices and methods worldwide, to increase evaluation use, promote evaluation as a profession and support the contribution of evaluation to the generation of theory and knowledge about effective human action.*