

# The Costs We Carry

How Corporate Greed and Political Games Have Impacted NC





President Trump sailed into office on lofty promises of bringing prices down and making life affordable again. One year later, his disastrous tariffs have caused the cost of many essential goods to skyrocket at the same time that his signature budget bill has slashed funding for healthcare and food assistance.

Republicans in North Carolina have only made things worse. Last summer, they passed legislation that allows corporate behemoth Duke Energy to raise energy costs for households, while refusing to pass a state budget that would give our underpaid teachers a raise they deserve.

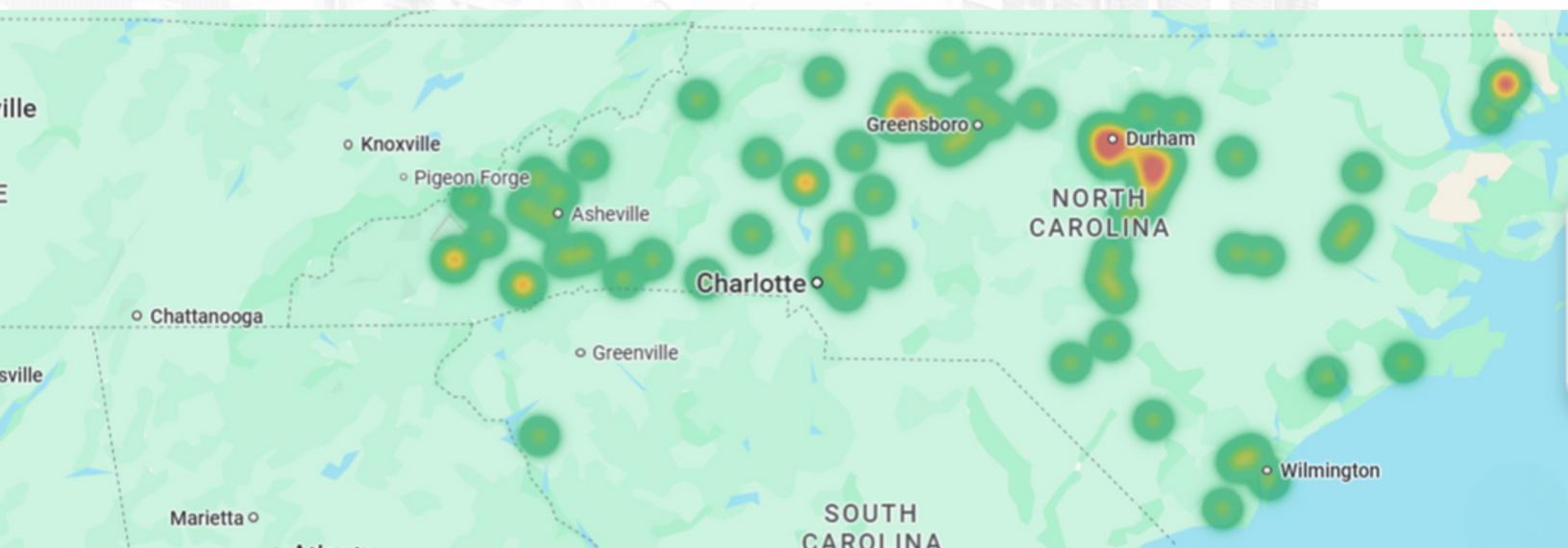
North Carolinians from every walk of life are being impacted by these policies that prioritize the corporate bottom line over everyday people. We wanted to hear from those impacted directly and give them a chance to tell their stories.



From October to December 2025, we reached out to North Carolinians across the state via our website, social media, and word of mouth, with one simple question:

**If you could tell your lawmakers one thing about the rising cost of living, what would it be?**

We received 94 submissions from across the state:



On the following pages, see how corporate greed and political games have impacted North Carolinians on healthcare, groceries, housing, and utilities.





# Healthcare



“

**Please don't take  
away our Social  
Security and  
Medicare, we  
will die.”**

# Healthcare

"We have been stretched for years financially, and may reach a place where health insurance is not doable for everyone in our family. I'm on medication that would be \$10K per year without insurance for a brain injury. Mental healthcare is unattainable – one of my children needs a therapist and to be assessed for behavioral and learning issues, but we haven't found anyone who can take our insurance who is currently accepting pediatric patients in the Triangle. Families are so, so stretched, and the healthcare crisis will put us over the edge. Why can every other industrialized country figure out healthcare, but so many of us go bankrupt trying to survive?"

---

**"I rely on Medicaid, being dual eligible. I think it is absolutely terrible that the state NC legislature recessed before it could fund the Medicaid budget because my caseworker hasn't even been able to get up with me yet."**

---

"I help take care of my mother who is a senior whose Medicaid was recently cut. While her Medicaid was supplemental to her Medicare coverage, with the rising cost of healthcare premiums, it makes me nervous that she no longer will be able to afford healthcare on her own. She cannot risk going without healthcare, as medical care is needed to help manage her high blood pressure. She is not the only person in my family going through this, nor in my community."

---

"These little raises, like for Social Security, do not actually keep up with inflation. With the rise in Medicare coming next year, it is a slap in the face. YOU are so out of touch."

---

**"I have two dependents with chronic illness. The cost of health care continues to go up and my ability to pay for their continued care becomes more and more burdensome. It seems to me that those that represent North Carolinians have lost sight of what their job is. It is NOT to just fight to gain more power and then give tax breaks to businesses and the wealthy. It is to ensure that all citizens have the ability to live and thrive in this state."**

---

"I have 3 children. One is a new baby, the second is a 12-year-old who is in remission from leukemia, and the third is a 15-year-old who has just been diagnosed with diabetes. My husband has a thyroid condition. I had a traumatic delivery with this pregnancy and I hemorrhaged and died for 2 and 1/2 mins. Thankfully they were able to revive me, but I have some brain damage from this, along with just being diagnosed with diabetes, kidney issues, and a heart condition. We just qualified for Medicaid when it was expanded but my husband received a pay raise of \$1 this year for a promotion. Because of this \$1 we are on a thin line with Medicaid – if they are unable to keep the expansion, we will lose it."

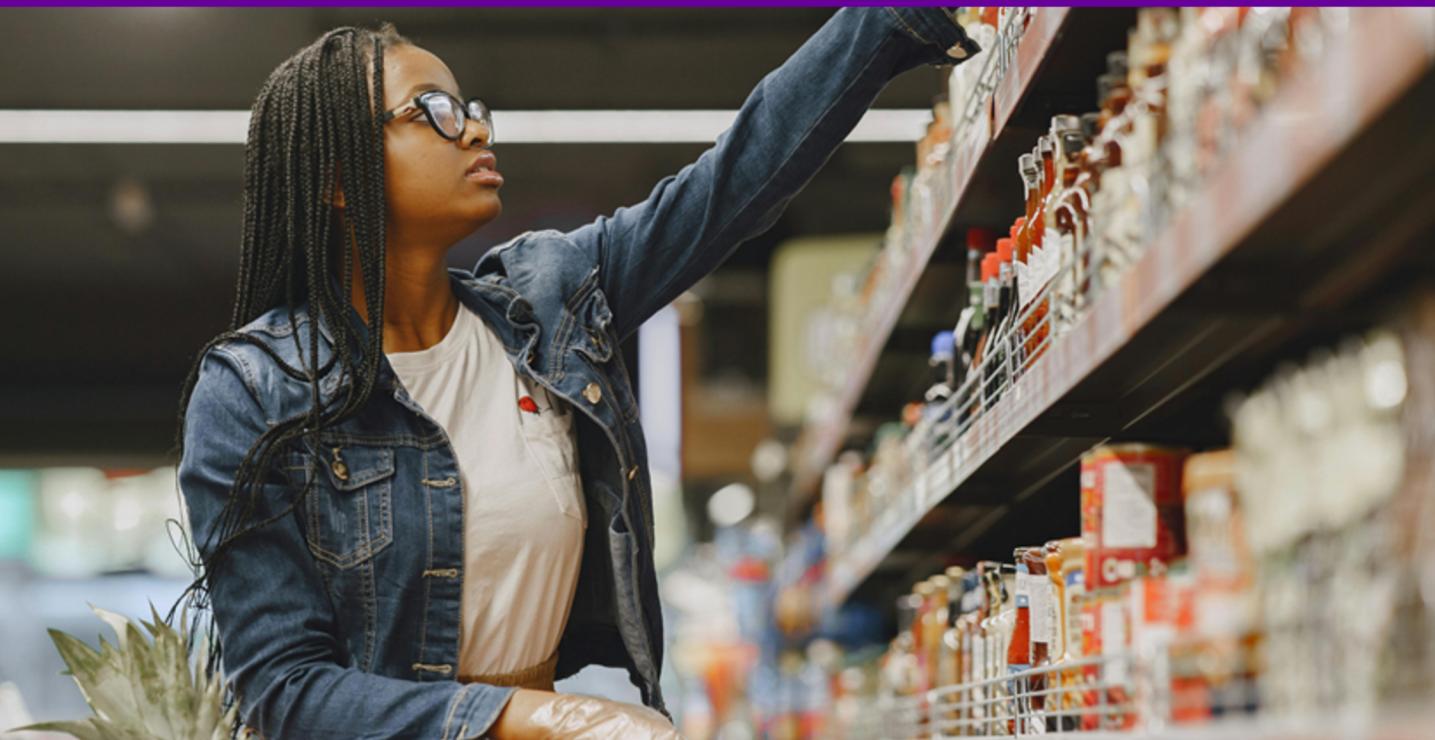
---

**"My husband is 75 years old and is still working due to medical insurance. I understand that Medicare and supplemental insurance is extremely expensive. I take a lot of medication. Someone has to do something to get costs under control."**

---

"My health insurance plan has increased \$35/month to receive the same coverage."

# Groceries



“

**I don't know anyone right now who is not stressed out about having enough money to keep their home or feed their family.”**



# Groceries

"I would tell our legislators to actually go out and talk to their constituents and find out what they are struggling with. It's so horrible to see so many people without food, insurance, and just struggling to get by. I think they forget that real people's problems do exist. They are on Jones St. to do the work of protecting people and that's not what's happening. I have been there with food insecurities and probably 1 or 2 paychecks away from shifting my bills around at the rate this economy is going. Something has to give and it's on them to fix things for us all."

**"With the \$700 a week my husband makes right now, after our bills – there's nothing. We are charging groceries and gas on credit cards."**

"At 83 years old, I can barely buy food."

"Disabled people get HUNGRY TOO!"

"I am a retiree with a very comfortable lifestyle. Even with that comfort I chose not to purchase hamburger meat at \$8.58/lb. How can a family of four afford to eat with grocery prices as they are now?"

"My husband and I have needed to modify our grocery list, cancel vacations plans, and repeatedly modify our budgets to deal with all these increases. I work hard, but I shouldn't have to work this hard just to make ends meet. I'm missing out on valuable time with my family and loved ones because I am working so hard. When will our elected officials start working for us, the hardworking North Carolinians?"

**"I'm 69. I'm on a very tight budget, I have medical issues, and I rely on my SNAP, as do the other seniors at the senior apartment building where we all live in NC."**

"There are millions of North Carolinians who are currently having to pick and choose between healthcare, keeping food on the table, or keeping the lights on. There are folks in this state whose dreams and hope of building a good life for themselves have been shattered because they can barely afford to sustain their basic needs. People paying a cost that should not be theirs to pay, just to live day to day."

**"Groceries are too high."**

"I saw a young lady last night on the street corner in our town with a sign. She was asking for money for food. She had a baby and a baby carriage. What does that tell you about our conditions here?"

**"This year has been one of the most difficult for our family. Our grocery bill has doubled, the career that I chose and have poured into is under attack, I still am paying student loans which affects my ability to save for my children's college, and my daughter needs routine procedures at a children's hospital that we pay thousands of dollars in our out-of-pocket costs after insurance."**

# Groceries

**"The biggest impact I've experienced over the past year has been at the grocery store. My wife and I have had to change the products we buy in order to save money. We used to spend about \$50 every two days on groceries, but if we continued buying the same items, our bill would now be closer to \$80 every two days.**

Our electric bills have also increased. We don't use much electricity, so the impact hasn't been as significant, but we've still seen monthly increases of about \$20 to \$40, depending on the month.

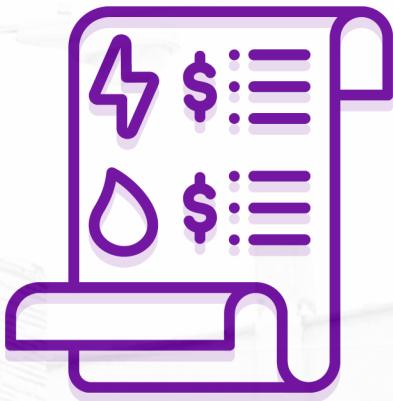
This is for a family of two. I can't imagine what this looks like for bigger families."

---

"I work too hard to be struggling this much financially. I have good paying jobs. Yes, jobs. I work two jobs just to get by -- both pay well above minimum wage.

**My energy bills and grocery bills seem to just go up and up and up. I have been bundling up inside my apartment on colder days just so I don't have to run the heat. Groceries are so expensive I have found myself skipping meals just to make it to my next paycheck.**

Additionally, my student loans have begun accruing interest again, so I've needed to budget for that, putting yet another large strain on me financially."



# Housing & Utilities



“

**Keeping my place at 68° is costing me a fortune this winter and we're not even in the coldest months yet.”**

# Housing & Utilities

"Rent and mortgages are so high that even people with 'good jobs' are struggling to keep up. It shouldn't feel impossible to afford a place to live. We need real solutions to bring housing costs down so people aren't constantly stressing about how to stay afloat."

"We are trying to buy a house, but we cannot afford the payment, so we rent a three bedroom trailer. Now with a family of 5 there's no room for all of us, but we cannot afford a bigger place because rent is out of control. They want \$1200 or more for a 4 bedroom and that would take us two checks to pay and I can't imagine struggling more than we are now."

**"I'm a nurse and I can't buy a home. If I knew how awful things we're going to get, I would have not sold my home in 2017 and moved to NC. I'm afraid I'll never be able to own a home again."**

"I've already cut out one meal a day to try and save money to pay for the high cost of utilities. What are elderly people supposed to do in situations such as this?"

"My monthly Duke Energy bill has increased \$60-70 a month despite all the efforts we do to lower our energy consumption. I have never had to do a payment arrangement before my recent Duke Energy bills, but because the bill is so high now, I have had to enter into my first arrangement."

**"We need affordable, clean energy - NOT Duke!"**

"It's getting harder and harder to buy groceries, pay electric bills that keep going up. I understand Duke is raising their rates again."

**"I don't have enough to eat! I can't put gas in my car! If you take away any more, I won't be able to pay for electricity and water!"**

"Stop prioritizing the interests of corporations over the interests of the people you are supposed to represent. Your recent votes benefit corporations like Duke Energy and harm people in our state who are just trying to keep up."

"North Carolinians need you to provide affordable housing, healthcare, and education. If you focused on reducing costs for citizens instead of finger pointing and political gerrymandering we would be in much better shape. Enough of the nonsense in political games and rhetoric. Do your job!"

**"The cost of living has become 'astronomical'.**  
Rent going up \$100 EVERY year is...unnecessary. Landlords are simply making a KILLING off of tenants in order to 'line their pockets' with even MORE money from one year to the next! It's about time we looked into 'capping' rent rates & 'rent stabilization'. We, also, should look into 'cheaper' alternatives for energy to lower costs as well as transportation in order to lower costs for groceries as well. Mass public transportation should also be 'free'."



# **It doesn't have to be like this.**

We don't have to settle for runaway prices and corporate greed.

Together we have power. We can hold our elected officials accountable, and advocate for policies that make life more affordable.

**Join us at the Coalition Against  
Right-Wing Extremism.**

