

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2019**

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HOUSE BILL 461

Short Title: Funds for Fort Fisher Aquarium. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Davis and McElraft (Primary Sponsors).

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

Referred to: State and Local Government, if favorable, Appropriations, Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, if favorable, Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

March 27, 2019

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA
AQUARIUM AT FORT FISHER.

Whereas, the Aquarium at Fort Fisher is the most popular of the State's three aquariums and the most visited attraction in southeastern North Carolina, having 493,603 visitors in 2018; and

Whereas, annually, the Aquarium hosts more than 25,000 North Carolina school students, reaches an additional 10,000 students through its Outreach programs with travelling classrooms, and attracts over 120,000 participants to its educational programs, camps, and field trips; and

Whereas, the Aquarium is an important resource for youth groups such as the 4-H, scouts, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Clubs, all of which participate in camps and programs at the facility; and

Whereas, the Aquarium also has a large and active volunteer force with over 505 local volunteers who contributed nearly 32,000 hours of service during 2018, working in education and animal care; and

Whereas, the Aquarium structure is over 40 years old, having had its last capital renovation in 2002; and

Whereas, since 2002, the Aquarium has had more than 6.4 million visitors; and

Whereas, a refresh of the Aquarium's galleries and exhibits is needed to sustain the Aquarium's popularity and to better serve its educational mission; and

Whereas, plans have been made for the renovation of the facility to include structural upgrades, updated displays, redesigned classroom spaces, a new otter habitat, a new large feature aquarium to display sand tiger sharks, and other improvements; and

Whereas, the expansion project is estimated to cost \$20 million, of which the Aquarium plans to raise \$5 million through its capital campaign by the North Carolina Aquarium Society and \$5 million through admission receipts; and

Whereas, State funds are needed to complete the project; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of North Carolina Aquariums, the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) for the 2019-2020 fiscal year in nonrecurring funds for expansion of the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher.



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SECTION 2. This act becomes effective July 1, 2019.