



Caring for Our Communities

Sophia's comprehensive plan to care
for North Carolina's communities.



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Platform of Care

An Overview



Sophia Chitlik is driven by a vision to make North Carolina the best state in the country for working families and the businesses they power.

How do we do that? By caring for children, caregivers, and communities.



Our Children



Our Caregivers



Our Community

In this document we focus on **Our Communities.**



Caring for Communities

Our communities aren't just places.

Our communities are made of people and the systems that connect them. In college, Sophia studied social movement theory and community control, and she has spent her entire career supporting non-profits and projects that bring those theories into reality. She believes that we must do more to care for the communities that have cared for us, and that begins with trusting communities to manage their own resources.

Justice feels out of reach for so many right now.

Whether it's making enough money to put food on the table or reintegrating into the workforce, our systems don't always support our communities the way they should. North Carolinians are shouldering so much right now, and it's the job of our legislators to lessen those burdens - not increase them. Sophia believes we must be doing more to make our criminal legal system less harmful and more equitable.

A safe, green North Carolina is possible.

One of the things Sophia loves most about North Carolina is its natural beauty, and she is committed to be a steward of North Carolina's land, sea, and air for her son and all future generations. Environmental justice is so deeply tied to all other forms of justice - safety for our children, wealth for our workforce, and equity and health for all people. That's what Sophia will fight so hard for if elected.

Sophia's top four priorities to support communities dignity and control at every phase are:

1. Affordable housing.

Expand access to safe, permanent, affordable stable housing.

2. Support for working families.

Make it possible for families to be healthy, whole, and employed.

3. Community justice.

Increase equity in our justice system.

4. A green future.

Protect our environment and invest in renewable, affordable energy communities. function.



1. Affordable Housing

District 22 is facing a disastrous shortage of affordable housing, which is contributing to rapid gentrification and displacement of vulnerable Black and Brown communities. In Durham County more than 50% of renter households are “cost-burdened” and pay more than [30% of their income on rent](#). Over [1 in 6](#) of these households (over 4,700 families) have faced an eviction filing in the past year. This crisis is hitting Black tenants the hardest: while Black tenants are 43.5% of Durham’s renting population, they are [75.8% of the tenants facing eviction](#).

Sophia will work hard to ensure that everyone in our community has a place to live. We can and must do more to tackle this crisis and keep people in the communities that they've helped to build.

With Durham County growing 20% more quickly than the rest of the state, we know our community will continue to be hit hardest by this housing crunch, and measures to keep people in their homes and provide a stock of permanent affordable housing are desperately needed. Sophia would expand access to stable housing by:

Supporting reparative ownership initiatives that keeps residents in their communities by:

- **Investing in Black Land Trusts:** The Black population has fallen by more than half in some downtown Durham block groups. We must make it possible for the people who built Durham to stay here. One community-led solution to this crisis is through Land Trusts, which afford the community permanent control over the land and housing that the trust buys or is gifted. Sophia believes these trusts should receive public funds so that their impact can be expanded.
- **Expanding the first-generation homeownership credit:** Currently, these credits apply mostly to rural areas. We must expand these grant-based programs to the urban areas threatened most by gentrification and displacement.
- **Replicating successful pilots to increase Black home ownership:** With the racial wealth gap getting worse and Black home ownership rates in Durham in the [95% lowest rates](#) of all metropolitan areas, it is imperative that we implement reparative programs to increase Black home ownership. With a background in public-private partnerships, Sophia will work diligently to bring resources to community-led solutions to this crisis.
- **Providing down payment assistance:** Sophia wants to expand the NC Home Advantage Program to provide more first-time homebuyers with assistance to get into their first home.

Building more and more intentional housing:

- **Investing in workforce housing:** Sophia supports partnering with local school districts and governments to provide workforce housing for teachers and other public sector workers.
- **Expanding the Supportive Housing Development Program:** The supportive housing model is a time-tested approach to serving low-income individuals, adults with disabilities, individuals going through reentry, and people in recovery from addiction, and it is a no-brainer for North Carolina. Sophia is in favor of expanding this vital program, particularly in response to our current opioid crisis.
- **Allowing inclusive development:** Inclusionary zoning can require developers to set aside a percentage of new developments to be affordable to low and moderate income renters and homeowners. North Carolina is one of eleven states that reinforce historically exclusionary development by blocking communities from pursuing these policies. Sophia believes inclusionary zoning could help Durham and other communities in North Carolina tackle the affordable housing crisis.
- **Building more public housing:** Waitlists for public housing in North Carolina can be up to [five years](#). We clearly have a massive supply and demand issue. We must build more public and affordable housing, especially near public transit. We must

use our budget surplus to add more funding to our North Carolina Housing Trust Fund. Sophia is in favor of expanding access to contraception, especially for individuals who are uninsured or underinsured. Sophia is in favor of SB 540, the Right to Use Contraception Act.

Supporting tenants and limiting evictions:

- **Encouraging best practices:** Sophia is in favor of replicating legislation like New York's [Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019](#) which support tenants in escaping the vicious cycle of eviction. Sophia is also in favor of incentivizing landlord's to use best practices, like Oklahoma does with its [Goldstar Landlord program](#).

- **Creating a Tenant's Bill of Rights:** Sophia is strongly in favor of creating a Tenant's Bill of Rights that makes the baseline clear to landlords and tenants alike.
- **Preventing eviction by continuing COVID-era eviction assistance programs:** Sophia believes that we should expand The Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Eviction Program (HOPE) to provide rental and utility support, and increase support for NC Legal Aid eviction diversion, which together have successfully supported thousands of families in avoiding eviction.





2. Support for Working Families

Workers are human beings: we're parents, children, and friends. However, workers in our state don't have the support they need to be both caregivers and productive employees. We've seen from other states and from our own state during COVID-19 that we can do more to support working families.

That's why Sophia believes in:

- **Raising the minimum wage:** According to the North Carolina Justice Center, “the current North Carolina minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, a full-time minimum-wage worker earns... \$1,000 less than the federal poverty level for 2016 for a family of one adult and one child.” We must raise the minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour so full-time workers don't live in poverty. Sophia believes
- in repealing HB-2 and the archaic limitations on municipalities so that cities and regions can set their own higher minimum wages.
- **Stabilizing the childcare industry:** AARPA funds put \$24B into the childcare industry, but the General Assembly failed to continue these subsidies even though we have a budget surplus. Waitlists for full-day care for infants in large city

areas are often one year long. What are families supposed to do in the meantime? At the start of the year, 155,000 children lost access to care and over 1,700 centers closed.. We must use state funds to stabilize the childcare industry so that parents can go to work.

- **Supporting domestic workers and childcare providers:** Sophia is in favor of a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights and supports supplements and incentives for child and home health care workers so that they can make a living wage while doing vital work for our communities. Domestic workers are disproportionately women of color, and Sophia firmly believes that they deserve the respect and benefits workers in other industries enjoy.
- **Providing paid sick and family leave:** Sophia is in favor of paid sick leave, including legislation modeled on the The Healthy Families Act. Sophia is in favor of making at least twelve weeks of paid parental leave standard for all in North Carolina to welcome a new baby, care for an aging parent or support an ill spouse. We must make it possible to be parents and workers.
- **Restoring the Earned Income Tax Credit:** North Carolina is one of the only states in the country to eliminate the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is a lifeline for working families. Sophia is strongly in favor of bringing back the EITC and would work to champion this legislation if elected. Sophia is also heartened by Michigan's proposed Caregiver's Tax Credit and would love to see North Carolina lead the way with a similar proposal to support young families.
- **Increasing unemployment benefits:** Currently, our unemployment system does not create an adequate safety net for workers. Sophia believes in increasing this benefit to 26 weeks and increasing the maximum benefit per week to a livable level. Losing a job unexpectedly should not sentence families to hunger or eviction.

- **Tackling healthcare debt:** The threat of medical debt deters people from seeking care and the reality of medical debt burdens families for decades. According to our own Republican State Treasurer, "some of North Carolina's nonprofit hospitals billed \$149.2 million to poor patients who should have qualified for charity care under the hospitals' own policies." We need to hold our nonprofit hospital systems to account for the medical debt crisis by providing clarity on community and financial assistance benefit standards.



3. Community Justice

Sophia is in favor of massive shifts to our criminal legal system, which have, since their inception, been weaponized against communities of color. North Carolinians spend over \$1.5 billion a year to lock up some 30,000 human beings. So many of those folks just don't need to be there, and those convicted of drug offenses are at the top of that list. Sophia is heartened by the bipartisan support we saw with the Second Chance Act, and if elected, she would seek strong bipartisan partnership on the following reforms:



Ending the disastrous “war on drugs” by:

- **Legalizing and regulating marijuana:** Sophia is in favor of the legalization of marijuana for recreational and medical use. This will have massive economic benefits for our state, and it will end discriminatory over-enforcement that disproportionately impacts Black citizens. We know that Black and White citizens use marijuana at similar rates but that Black citizens are twice as likely to be arrested for using marijuana. That’s why Sophia is in favor of SB 346, the Marijuana Justice and Reinvestment Act, and would work with her colleagues if elected to get it passed. Sophia also believes in retroactive releases for people impacted by the passage of marijuana legalization.

- **Ending mandatory minimums for drug-related offenses:** Mandatory minimums do not keep people safer, but they do keep people in prison longer. This has disastrous consequences for families, and has disproportionately torn Black men away from their communities. Mandatory minimums have been weaponized against Black people, who face them [65 times more often than other defendants](#). The First Step Act, passed in 2020, was truly just that. We can and must do more.
- **Ending cash bail for non-violent drug offenses:** Sophia is in favor of House Bill 271, which would restrict bail for Class 3 misdemeanors. She is also in favor of encouraging our district attorneys to take action on this, and is inspired by District Attorney Deberry’s work to limit cash bail here in Durham.

Implementing common-sense measures that increase equity and save money:

- **Ending the death penalty:** Over 108 countries and 23 states have abolished the death penalty, and Sophia believes North Carolina should join them. Sophia has been advocating to end the death penalty since she was a teenager. In addition to believing that it is wrong, Sophia also believes our application of the death penalty is deeply inequitable. Since 1973, [12 people](#) on death row in North Carolina have been exonerated. We also know that the death penalty is disproportionately

applied to Black people, and that every year innocent Black people are murdered by our own government. This is unjust, and it must end. In the interim, we must pass The North Carolina Racial Justice Act of 2009 again (it was repealed in 2013).

- **Raising the age:** Sophia believes in raising the minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 8 to 12. She also believes that children under 16 should never be tried as adults, regardless of the crimes they are accused of.
- **Increasing and mandating data transparency:** One of the challenges we have to reforming our criminal legal system is the lack of public reporting and data accountability requirements which makes data aggregation and problem-solving a major challenge for advocates and policy-makers.

Keeping guns out of the hands of people who are a threat to society, including:

- **Regulating who can buy and sell guns by:** banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, regulating ghost guns and requiring that all gun dealers be licensed at a state level.
- **Keeping guns out of the hands of people who are unstable by:** supporting an Extreme Risk Law, which would mean people in crisis don't have access to firearms, and implementing waiting periods to buy a gun.
- **Keeping guns out of the hands of people who endanger women, children, and people of color by:** making it illegal for someone convicted of a violent hate crime to buy a gun, making it illegal for domestic violence offenders to buy a gun, and making it illegal for someone convicted of stalking to buy a gun.
- **Expanding background checks:** These are critical to helping us keep women and children safe; in North Carolina, about [40% of homicides among](#)

[women are related to intimate partner \(domestic\) violence](#). In our state, guns are one of the leading causes of death among children and teens, second only to car accidents.

Investing in prevention and eliminating contributing factors to incarceration and recidivism by:

- **Ending the felony SNAP ban:** Currently, it is legal in our state to deny people with drug-related felony convictions to receive SNAP and TANF assistance for six months or more after their release. This doesn't keep people safe, but it does keep families hungry. Sophia would work to change this.
- **Supporting reentry programs:** Sophia believes in expanding Medicaid for individuals facing incarceration before their release and wants to see supportive housing expanded for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- **Tackling the opioid epidemic:** Sophia is in favor of harm reduction programs and believes in community control of settlement funds and additional resources to fight this crisis. Sophia believes that naloxone (NARCAN) should be more readily available in schools and communities, and would support legislation to expand access to this life-saving drug.
- **Expanding unarmed mental health response:** Durham has pioneered new models of community care, including the H.E.A.R.T. program, which sends out unarmed clinicians and other mental health responders to address non-violent mental health crises or quality of life concerns, as well as co-responders with police that have a higher risk for violence. Sophia believes this model should be expanded across the state.



4. A Green Future

This global crisis mandates that we do everything in our power to accelerate the energy transition and protect our environment. Environmental pollution disproportionately impacts Black and Brown communities in North Carolina, which means that our environmental policies must also have strong equity and reparative lenses.

One of the reasons Sophia is running for State Senate is to be a steward of the environment, something her opponent has failed to do repeatedly. He was one of only two Democrats who voted in favor of The Farm Bill, which stripped protections away from millions of acres of vital wetlands. One of his colleagues publicly called it “the most destructive environmental bill since I was elected in 2004.” If elected, Sophia will do everything she can to keep North Carolina’s natural beauty intact by:

Accelerating the energy transition and protecting consumers:

- **Investing in a green energy future:** Sophia believes that our schools, homes and government buildings should be powered by clean, renewable energy. She believes more market competition will lead to more renewable energy options and lower costs for consumers and believes in ending Duke’s monopoly and building an energy grid capable of powering us into the 22nd century.
- **Standing for energy affordability:** Energy rates are poised to rise 14.6% over the next three years. This is a crisis for all of us and especially for low-income

North Carolinians. Sophia believes we must push back against the Duke Energy monopoly that is driving costs up, while also increasing funding for programs like the NC Weatherization Assistance Program to make homes more energy efficient and the NC Low Income Energy Assistance Program so people don’t need to choose between paying their energy bills and covering basic needs.

- **Creating a green jobs pipeline:** In order to meet the demands of the energy transition and promote resilience in the face of climate change, we’re going to need workers with new skills. Our community college system is well designed for this task, and Sophia believes in providing them with

increased resources to train and graduate workers who are prepared to build our clean energy future. She wants to learn from and expand programs like NC A&T's STEPs4Growth Program.

- **Accelerate EV adoption in public transit and beyond:** Sophia is in favor of massive investments to electrify cars and public transit here in North Carolina and believes our district can and should lead the way. Sophia will be an advocate in Raleigh for the critical resources to do that.

Implementing policies that acknowledge the reality of the climate crisis and foster resilience:

- **Supporting local tree canopies:** Trees are one of the best ways to support the health of our communities in the face of extreme heat. Sophia opposes any efforts by the state legislature to preempt local communities from passing tree-protective ordinances.
- **Updating building codes to keep North Carolinians safe:** In 2023, our state legislature passed a law to block any updates on our state building code until 2031, despite how critical the code update is to promoting energy affordability and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and protecting North Carolinians from natural disasters. Sophia will fight to reverse this decision, and unlike her opponent, Sophia has not and will not take corporate PAC money from big developers so that she can stand up for working families.
- **Safeguarding our kids from forever toxins like PFAS:** Sophia is in favor of the 2023 Safe Drinking Water Act, which would limit toxins in drinking water, and HB 370, which would limit the use of firefighting foams that include PFAS. Sophia is in favor of testing for PFAS at the city level so we have a comprehensive understanding of our water quality in the places we actually live, and not just where our water comes from.
- **Updating our water pipe infrastructure:** Lead and heavy metal contamination threatens our children, and we can trace much of that back to our regional and city-based pipe infrastructure. We can and must do more. As State Senator, Sophia would join our Congressional delegation in fighting for the Federal funding we need to create safe water infrastructure for our communities.
- **Keeping our parks safe:** Sophia is deeply alarmed by the levels of lead and PFAS in our local parks. As State Senator, Sophia would pioneer legislation authorizing the Department of Health to monitor and abate lead in our parks the same way they already do with dangerous lead paint.

Protecting our land, sea, and air:

- **Supporting our environment and our farmers:** North Carolina is a global agricultural leader, and Sophia is in favor of programs that expand our competitive advantage. That's why she supports programs like the North Carolina Swine Flood Buyout Program.



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