

# FIGHTING BACK, MOVING FORWARD



# A Message from Sophia

Dear Friend,

December 18, 2025

**I ran for the State Senate with a desire to serve and a core hypothesis: you don't need to vote with Republicans to work with them.** As a pragmatic progressive, I believe in fighting for democracy, equality, and care just as much as I believe in getting things done, which is what I've dedicated myself to doing since I was sworn in in January of this year.

**This report is designed to show you receipts, share learnings, and give you a deep dive into my legislative strategy and what's happened this year in Raleigh.** It details my victories and challenges, and outlines a path forward to break the Supermajority and protect our fellow citizens from harm.

On the day Donald Trump was elected, so was I. Since then, Durham has been in a constant fight against attacks on our civil rights, immigrant families, limited social safety net, public education, and our democracy.

**In the face of adversity, we fought back and cared for one another.**

- When racial gerrymandering swept the nation, we stood up and spoke out all over the nation and packed the gallery right here in North Carolina.
- When ICE and Customs and Border Patrol invaded our community, we fought back by mobilizing community safety patrols, supporting our schools, and feeding our neighbors.
- When Republicans corrupted a good bill with discriminatory limits on healthcare and authoritarian book bans, we resisted by speaking out and refusing to vote.
- When Chantal devastated our community, we fought back by organizing mutual aid and advocating for – and passing – legislation that allocated \$6M in funding for survivors.
- When SNAP benefits were in limbo, we fought back by raising emergency assistance funds, organizing food drives, and feeding our neighbors.
- When state Medicaid funding was slashed, we fought back by rallying providers and patients to tell their stories, bringing their powerful testimonies directly to the legislature.

**Resistance isn't our only job, and I've found ways to win even the most challenging environments – all while raising my four year-old and not taking a single dime of corporate PAC money.** I'm one of the only Senate Democrats to get anything signed into law this year (an amendment on childcare regulation). I've championed our values in a way that breaks through partisan gridlock, including:

- Working with Senators across the aisle to build support for childcare expansion.
- Introducing legislation with Republicans to increase pay for athletic coaches in public schools.
- Helping to build an unlikely coalition to defeat the Farm Bill, which would have let chemical manufacturers get forever immunity for the harm caused by their toxic products.

**These fights are far from over, and I know we will continue to meet this moment together. I also have a LOT more fight and care left in me, which is why I'm running for reelection in 2026.** Together, we can continue to fight back in Raleigh and to move us forward here in Durham.

With determination, gratitude, and hope –



State Senator Sophia Chitlik, Durham's District 22

# Annual Report

**Senator Sophia Chitlik**  
**North Carolina Senate**

**“In every room she walks into, Sophia shows up as a teammate, a problem solver, and a relentless advocate for Durham’s people. She asks the hard questions that make legislation better and ensures that every policy we pass reflects the values of fairness, opportunity, and care for our community.**

**Sophia has been a champion of childcare access, living wages, and working families – the backbone of our economy and the tireless heart of our city. She works tirelessly, listens deeply, and never forgets who she represents.**

**Durham is stronger because of Senator Sophia Chitlik’s leadership, and I’m proud to stand with her as we continue building a future where every family has the chance to thrive.”**



***Representative Zack Hawkins, Chair of the Durham County Legislative Delegation***

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**“On issues of affordability, child care and education, Senator Chitlik has been a steadfast partner working for a brighter future for North Carolina.”**

*Governor Josh Stein*

## MY FIRST YEAR

In my first year in office, I have consistently stood up for Durham’s values and our people, fought back fiercely against Republican overreach, and built consensus-based coalitions behind the scenes.

As the *only* Senator with a toddler, one of only a handful of women of child-bearing age, and the only mom with a child in childcare, these fights are personal. That’s why I’ve been one of the leading voices in the Senate in fighting for childcare, LGBTQIA+ rights, reproductive justice, paid leave,

public education, gun sense, and money for basic needs. I've been out front fighting Republican attacks on immigrants, Medicaid cuts, "banning DEI," handouts to corporations, and corporate PAC money. *Flip to the "Fighting Back and Moving Forward" section on page 16 for the receipts.*



### In my first year in office, I have prioritized the following:

- **Transparency and communication.** It's extremely difficult for even the most informed voters to follow what's happening in Raleigh, which is why I've been active on social media. With over a half a million views across platforms this year alone, I've worked to message in real time, shine a light on things Republicans want to sweep under the rug, and demystify how you can take action.
- **Values-driven policy and accountability.** I am one of the most outspoken advocates on the Education, Judiciary and Regulatory Reform committees, where I am constantly exposing Republican hypocrisy, reshaping the media narrative, and mitigating harm.
- **Real results.** As a pragmatic progressive operating in a Republican supermajority, I understand that collaboration is a necessity in order to deliver results. As one of the Senate

Democrats to get anything signed into law all year, I have proven that I can work effectively to move policy forward.

- **Constituent services.** Whether it's help with the DMV or vital records, or listening to your opinions, I've prioritized direct constituent support and response in partnership with my legislative assistant, Kharrington Godbee.

- **Rapid response.** This has been a year of crises, most created by a cruel administration in Washington. We've faced mass lay-offs, grants disappearing overnight, SNAP in limbo, and Border Patrol kidnapping our neighbors. I've worked as a switchboard operator to help connect non-profits, philanthropists, constituents, and services.

- **Taking back power.** Republicans hold 30 seats in the Senate, which means they can override every single one of Governor Stein's vetoes. In order to get more done for Durham, we need leverage – and more Democratic colleagues. I've been working to raise funds to support the Senate Democratic Caucus so that we can break the supermajority.

## MY COMMITTEES

I take my committee work seriously. Committees are the waystation where legislation is debated and improved. I sit on the following committees:

- **Judiciary:** Which sees an enormous amount of bills about a diverse variety of topics. This gives me a good chance to fight back.
- **Education and Higher Education:** Sees bills for our K-12, community college, and public university system.
- **Education Appropriations:** Education is over 52% of the state budget! Sadly, this committee almost never meets.
- **Regulatory Reform:** A clearinghouse for all kinds of regulation, including environmental policies.

## BY THE NUMBERS

From January to November 2025:

### LEGISLATION

**81** bills co-sponsored

**52** bills written as a primary sponsor

**1** amendment passed\*

### THE WORK

**600+** hours spent working in Raleigh this year alone

**100%** committee attendance

**100%** attendance for voting sessions\*\*

**82%** of colleagues met with privately

**22** straight weeks in session from January to June

### RECORD

**478** votes taken

**100%** support in voting to uphold the Governor's vetoes

**39.4%** voted against the Republicans\*\*\*

### ACCESSIBILITY

**1,400+** constituent emails personally answered by me

**500+** constituent calls returned by our office

**170+** meetings with policy advocates

**36** DMV appointments secured for constituents

\* One of only three Democrats to do so this session!

\*\* I made it to every session, but missed a small number of votes because I had to leave by sundown on Rosh Hashanah. Leadership had previously promised not to schedule votes at this time.

\*\*\* Higher than even our amazing Democratic Leader herself!

## KEY INSIGHTS FROM MY FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

I wasted no time in getting started in Raleigh. From policy-making to media, I had a lot to learn (and still do). Here are my key takeaways from my first year:

- **Everyone has the same title, but different jobs.** My job as a progressive, freshman Senator in a “safe seat” is accountability, optimism, communication and innovation. That means that I get to be confrontational and out front on the issues; I get to be motivating my Democratic colleagues to have hope and stay in the game; I get to be translating what’s happening in the building to a wider audience and I get to be working on innovative, bipartisan policy solutions and whipping support for those ideas.

**“Senator Chitlik is one of our fiercest fighters in the General Assembly. In the chamber and in committee meetings, she keeps Republicans on their toes with her relentless preparation and fearless advocacy. She’s not just smart, she’s strategic, tough, and thriving in her role. Our caucus is stronger because of her.”**



**Senate Democratic Leader  
Sydney Batch**

- **The difference between 20 and 21 seats isn't plus one – it's 10x.** When we break the supermajority, the difference will be massive. We will be able to stop harm, add in amendments, and really work on bipartisan legislation. The power of one seat is a seat at the table for Democrats, and that's why I'm working so hard to raise money this season.

- **We can be tough and kind; in fact, we must be.** Anyone who has parented a toddler knows this: clear boundaries enable closeness. This year, I've made my policy boundaries clear. I don't believe in trading votes or in "going easy." I believe in relationships, and in the power of invitation. I've had Republican colleagues over for Passover seder. I know their wives' names and their favorite cookies. I treat my colleagues with kindness, and it's no coincidence that they take my calls.

- **The Triangle is the moral and financial engine of our Caucus.** Those of us lucky enough to represent this area have the freedom—and therefore the obligation—to go on offense in the media, and to raise the capital needed to fuel competitive races.





## 2. WHAT I DO AS YOUR SENATOR

This work varies wildly, and there's no standard playbook. In practice, this is a mostly full-time job masquerading as a part time job. The job is constantly changing based on district, Federal administrations, and community conditions. Serving as a Senator in the minority is drastically different from serving in the majority, where Senators can chair committees, drive the legislative agenda, and push through appropriations. The following "Five Cs" reflect how I've approached this role, this year, in this moment:

### THE FIVE C'S

1. Community care
2. Co-governance
3. Coalition building
4. Communication
5. Constituent Services

## 1. COMMUNITY CARE

I ran for the Senate on a Platform of Care to support Durham families: childcare access, reproductive freedom, affordable housing, community justice. Those promises remain central to my work, and you can see them in action in the "My Platform of Care in Action" section on page 18 of this report.

This year, we've learned that care isn't just policy. Our progressive values mean nothing if we can't operationalize them when our community is under attack. Care requires infrastructure — permanent networks that can activate in real time when we have a crisis. This isn't infrastructure I'm building, it's infrastructure our community has been building for decades. We need that infrastructure more than ever as the crises continue: ICE raids, massive Federal layoff, SNAP in peril, natural disaster, and more.

My job in these situations isn't just policymaker, it's "switchboard operator": connecting resources with the people who need them, coordinating nonprofits who may be working on parallel challenges, mobilizing volunteers, and gathering intelligence about where the next crisis could hit. Trying to help things move faster, and move together, including:

- **Activating philanthropic rapid response networks**, including pushing grantmaking organizations to deploy emergency capital and connecting them with groups on the ground, resulting in over \$50,000 in emergency funding to Chantal survivors and food security organizations.
- **Doing site visits**, where I go to organizations and meet with organizational leaders to see and hear about what's going on firsthand. This helps me to identify resources and foster strategic connections between organizations doing complementary work.

- **Mobilizing volunteers with campaign resources like text and email**, which has resulted in dozens of rapid response volunteers and thousands of dollars in philanthropic donations to local non-profits, turning digital engagement into concrete community action.
- **Gathering better data for decision-makers**. When federal layoffs hit Durham workers, I gathered data on the impact, who was affected, what resources they needed, and where support systems were failing. This way our constituent services and community response could be more targeted. I was able to share this information with other policy-makers and organizations on the ground.

**"Sophia has been on the ground day one, and still today, she has not left our side as a voice for the seemingly voiceless victims of the flood."**



*Exeter "Trey" Gilmore,  
President, Old Farm  
Neighborhood  
Association*

We know crisis response will be a major part of supporting our community through the chaos of this Federal administration. Here's how you can help:

- **If you're part of a nonprofit, mutual aid org, civic group, or community organization:** Email me at [sophia@sophiafornc.com](mailto:sophia@sophiafornc.com). I want to know your capacity, your challenges, and how I can help connect you to resources.
- **If you want to volunteer for rapid response:** Follow me on Instagram or sign up for my emails.

- **If you have resources to share:** Whether it's philanthropic funding, professional expertise, space, or supplies, my "switchboard operator" role means connecting resources with needs. Email me so I can connect you with organizations that are supporting resource deployment.



## 2. CO-GOVERNANCE

Traditional legislating looks like this: Politicians identify problems, draft solutions, maybe hold a listening session or town hall, then introduce bills.

Co-governance looks different: The people experiencing policy failures design the interventions. I serve as the pipeline to turn community wisdom into legislation.

In the short-term, I envision developing a stronger co-governance structure for policy development and introduction should I be reelected, one that really allows the wisdom of our community to be directly translated into legislation that benefits everyone. The most impactful policy ideas often don't come from legislators in Raleigh, they come from people living the problems often aware of improvements. Co-governance isn't just better policy; it can be a redistribution of power from a few politicians to the people closest to the solutions.

Here are some examples of legislation I've introduced that reflect co-governance:

### **SB 657, the Keeping Our Coaches Act**

would raise pay for high school pathetic coaches. This idea was brought to me by an athletic coach, who educated me about their low stipends and statewide inequities.

**S456, the Healthy Start NC Act** would provide cash payments in pregnancy and postpartum to people receiving. Similar legislation in Michigan was brought to my attention by a local non-profit leader and advocate. This bill was inspired by her organization's transformative work around providing economic support during and after pregnancy.

**S 586, Allergy Safe NC** would put lifesaving food allergy safety requirements into practice at childcare centers. It is the result of working with parents in our district who have children with anaphylactic allergies. We are currently working together on a package of food allergy legislation to keep kids in K-12 safe.

**S680, the Comprehensive Capital for Childcare Expansion Act** would create new ways to finance and scale locally-owned childcare small businesses. A provider brought me the challenges she was facing, and this bill was developed with her input as well as the input of dozens of finance, childcare, and philanthropy experts from across our region.

Durham has made strides in being a model for co-governance, but we still have a long way to go, which is why I'm going to need your help to make it possible. Here's how you can participate in the policymaking process:

- Have a policy idea? Email me at [sophia.chitlik@ncleg.gov](mailto:sophia.chitlik@ncleg.gov) with your ideas to start the conversation.
- Do you or your organization want to host a policy brainstorming session on a specific topic? Email [sophia@sophiafornc.com](mailto:sophia@sophiafornc.com).
- Join one of the "Snack and Unpack" briefings that me and Senator Murdock are hosting. Check my substack and social media for dates and to sign up.

**"Senator Chitlik championed life-changing mental health reform legislation during the 2025 legislation session with SB568, making it bipartisan, community-focused, and taking real, actionable steps to address the mental health crisis with the NC legislature."**

*Gina Giorgio  
Director of Strategy and Development,  
Students for Sensible Drug Policy*



### **Bipartisan breakthrough #1: Expanding mental health care for veterans**

I worked closely with Senator Bobby Hanig (R - Outer Banks) to craft **S568, The Innovative Treatments for Mental Health Act**. Modeled off of legislation in Alaska, the bill would create the North Carolina Mental Health and Psychedelic Medicine Task Force to explore the legal use of psychedelic medicine for PTSD treatment. Senator Hanig is a Marine Veteran, and a champion for veterans in the legislature. I'm deeply passionate about trauma-informed and compassionate care. We worked on the language together, and took the leap of introducing the bill. It set off a media firestorm, generating dozens of press hits and creating conversations within agencies. Together, Senator Hanig and I worked with the North Carolina Psychedelic Policy Coalition, academics, and national leaders to host a wildly successful Veterans Mental Health Advocacy Day at the General Assembly in June to lobby for the bill. This event helped generate additional support from Republican leaders and laid a foundation for passage in the future.

## **3. COALITION BUILDING**

Regardless of the bleak political context, it's still my responsibility to get things done for our community and for our state. The path to accomplishing even the tiniest things while in the minority is often through building coalitions that can enable bipartisan breakthroughs. I've worked on a number of bipartisan initiatives that have gained traction and built trust. Each is/was poised to have potential inclusion in the budget. However, the fate of the budget itself remains deeply uncertain. Still, these ideas have generated buzz, created out of the building opportunity for implementation, and built connective tissue across the aisle.

## **Bipartisan breakthrough #2: Raising pay for athletic coaches in our public schools**

After a local Durham athletic coach approached me with data on the abysmal pay structure for athletic coaches in our public schools, I worked with former middle school football coach Senator Eddie Settle (R - Yadkin) and Senate Minority Whip Todd Johnson (R - Cabarrus) to introduce [\*\*SB 657, the Keeping Our Coaches Act\*\*](#). This bill would allocate \$11M from our sports betting corpus to ensure that all middle school and high school athletic coaches get a stipend of at least \$3,000 per year, regardless of their district's wealth.

In the Senate, the bill received the co-sponsorship of two additional Democrats and an additional Republican, Senator Dana Jones (R - Forsyth). We also worked with front-line colleagues in the House and my colleague, Representative Zack Hawkins, to cross list the bill in the House, creating additional opportunities for the bill to move. We had dozens of coaches flood the General

Assembly for a lobbying day, and received incredible feedback from people across the state, especially in rural areas, where supplements are consistently lower. I was interviewed for the popular [\*\*Varsity Views podcast\*\*](#) about the topic, engaging a largely a-political audience in this advocacy.

## **Bipartisan breakthrough #3: Investing in economic development**

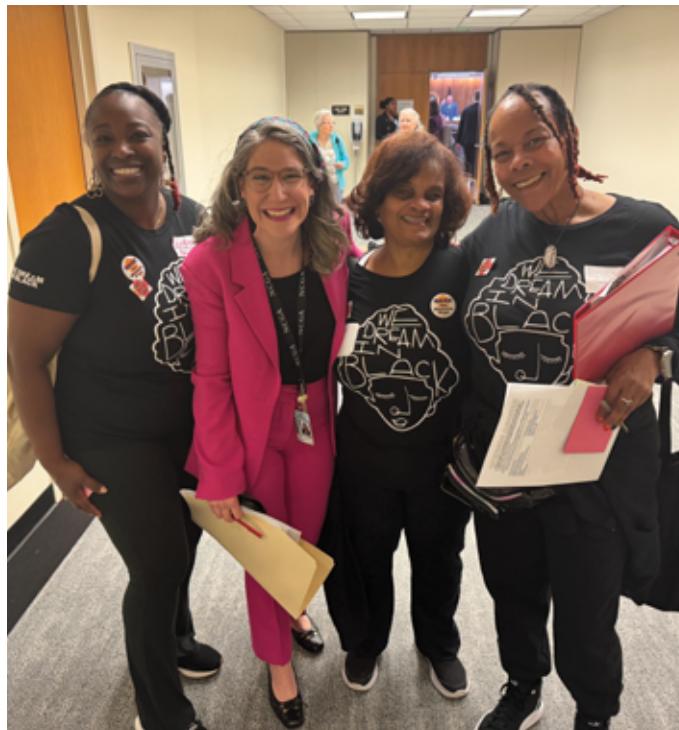
*[\*\*"I see myself in this cycle as a switchboard operator, trying to connect resources and ideas and people."\*\*](#)*

I've worked across the aisle on two core economic development projects this year: first, laying the foundation to bring more jobs to North Carolina as the [\*\*co-chair of the Economic Development's Film Industry Study Committee\*\*](#), and second, increasing investment into our vibrant biotech industry as a member of our Lifesciences Caucus.

[\*\*The new film subcommittee\*\*](#) represents a potential bipartisan revival of North Carolina's storied tax credits. I worked with the Republican co-chairs to arrange a Wilmington site visit, and, together, we're working on a bipartisan, bicameral proposal.

One way to support the life sciences is to push for essential [\*\*RTP infrastructure upgrades\*\*](#), which I've done in partnership with Senator Natalie Murdock. We were hopeful that these upgrades might be considered in our budgeting process given RTP's essential role in the statewide economy.

I've been working to bring business leaders, childcare providers, and financing institutions together to build an on-site childcare facility that benefits the whole community in North Durham, which is a childcare desert.



On these issues our progressive values and bipartisan support aligned. On reproductive rights, democracy and voting rights, and immigrant protections, no such compromise is acceptable.

## 4. COMMUNICATION

It's incredibly important to me and to our community that you know what's happening at the General Assembly. I've used social media this year to increase transparency, message out information in real time, and build trust with organizations and people like you. One reason that this is so difficult is because Senate Rules prohibit our sessions and floor speeches from being live streamed or recorded (unlike the House).

For me earned and social media are tools for education, shifting narratives, elevating impacted people, and accountability. For example, when I questioned Republicans about DEI in committee, it exposed just how little they knew about the thing they were seeking to ban, shifting the conversation to their hollow Trump copy-catting. When I confronted Republicans on the absurdity of their bill, the video reached tens of thousands of people and shifted the conversation from 'parental rights' to censorship.

**That's why I've recorded and posted over 60 explainer and committee videos since I've been in office**, not to mention an additional 84+ during my inaugural campaign. My content is focused on my policy priorities and working to roll back the curtain on how the General Assembly works.

Building this content takes time, but it's the best way to get information directly to you. We

shoot content at least once a month and post at least once a week; followers know they can count on me to explain what's going on in the General Assembly.

We've had some powerful viral moments, including my testimony in committee. But, more importantly, social media is an important way for me to engage directly with you in real time. Here's where you can find information from me online:

**On Threads, for real-time updates**



**On Instagram, for updates and videos:**



**On TikTok, for videos:**



**On Substack, for longform posts:**



## 5. CONSTITUENT SERVICES

How can we help **YOU?**

Our office is set up to help you get answers and services from the government agencies that work for you. Here are some things we can support with:

- DMV appointments
- Challenges with vital records
- Department of Revenue challenges or delays
- Unemployment benefits
- Delays or confusion with state agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services or Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Referrals to our Member of Congress' office for support with Federal issues like immigration challenges or passport issues
- Collaborating with other Durham elected officials or government offices, including local
- Commemorating an event or an individual with a Senatorial Statement
- Nominating someone for state honors, such as induction to the Order of the Longleaf Pine
- Lobbying and advocating for specific legislation



**“Sophia and her staff were of great help cutting through the notoriously opaque NCDMV bureaucracy when my son’s drivers permit application was referred for medical review. We made multiple calls over the course of weeks [to the DMV] and could never get a definitive answer.... After some quick email exchanges with Sophia’s office we quickly got a call back from the DMV, and the approval letter we needed was delivered as promised, just in time for him to start his behind the wheel training.”**

**- Adam Dickinson, Constituent**

When you're having a problem and you don't know who to contact, contact me. It's my job to help make sure you get the attention you need. Here's how to contact me:

- For a constituent services concern or to invite me to a community event, please email [Sophia.Chitlik@ncleg.gov](mailto:Sophia.Chitlik@ncleg.gov) and CC [Kharrington.Godbee@ncleg.gov](mailto:Kharrington.Godbee@ncleg.gov). You can also call our office at (919) 733-4809. If you don't get through, please be sure to leave a message, as we check these frequently!
- For a political concern or to invite me to a partisan event, please email [sophia@sophiafornc.com](mailto:sophia@sophiafornc.com). You can also always DM me on Instagram @sophiafornc.

## THE SIXTH C – CHALLENGE!

The five Cs - Community care, Co-governance, Coalition building, Communication and Constituent services - deserve full-time support and the full resources of our state government. But that's not the system we have. All legislators face a number of challenges to providing the world-class support our communities deserve.

Our legislature follows a “biennium” schedule, with a long session in the first year and a short session in the second year. In practice, this has devolved into a part-time job that involves being on-call full-time. At any moment (unless specifically addressed in adjournment resolution), I can be called back to work. Being a Senator pays \$13,900 annual salary, plus a \$104 daily per diem. I refuse a per diem when we are not in session. Legislators are expected to have other jobs, but because of the

immense flexibility needed, the salary greatly and unfairly limits who can serve.

Unfortunately, the legislature also affords limited resources to legislators to serve our community. We have one full-time legislative assistant who makes \$42,000 a year and no additional budget for constituent services, district offices, or emergency support. Lastly, legislation is supposed to involve oversight, budgeting and legislating – all of which Democrats have been completely shut out of, even as Republican leadership neglects these duties.

These structural barriers — low pay, limited resources, Republican control — are exactly why we need electoral reform, a priority for me in the upcoming Short Session. But they're not excuses for inaction. In spite of all of this, I've worked to deliver on my commitment to our community, regardless of the resources at hand.



### 3. FIGHTING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD



**"I'll tell you about Senator Sophia Chitlik. She is all about Durham values all the time. Nobody works harder or smarter than she does. And she's the person you want beside you in every fight."**

*Steve Schewel, former Mayor of Durham*

#### HOLDING REPUBLICANS ACCOUNTABLE

This year, I've leveraged my bully pulpit in committee and on the floor to expose

Republican hypocrisy, create accountability, and defend our state's most vulnerable. **Here are some key examples of how I've held Republicans accountable and shifted the narrative in the process:**

## **Exposing baseless attacks on DEI**

*"What the Republicans are doing with these three DEI bills is their own version of DEI. That is distraction, embellishment, and incitement."*

Republican leaders pushed through their third DEI-related bill of the session, while still not passing a budget. I reframed the conversation from "efficiency" to incompetence, uniting civil rights, education, and community leaders, creating social media virality and exposing the emptiness of the Republican agenda.

## **Protecting state employees**

*"Behind every one of these jobs, we have a reason, community, a team... it strikes me as actually very inefficient to summarily negate the work... I think we're here to create middle-class jobs and not to destroy them."*

Republican leaders proposed absurd government "efficiency" schemes threaten to hollow out critical agencies and undermine North Carolina's renowned public research capacity. I exposed the human cost and operational stupidity of their plans.

## **Fighting for gun sense**

*"SROs are markedly different than a grandfather with maybe eight hours of training."*

Republicans pushed through H193 and overturned the Governor's veto of the bill, giving civilians the ability to carry guns at private schools. I highlighted persuasive statistics that refuted their argument that this would make people safer.

They also passed SB50, giving everyone 18 years or older the ability to carry a concealed weapon without a permit. In committee, I asked if SB 50 had support from law enforcement, exposing a major gap in the

Republicans' arguments and creating [social media virality](#).

## **Highlighting authoritarian censorship**

*A legislative staff attorney admitted, under questioning from Sen. Sophia Chitlik, a Durham Democrat, that the bill would allow a parent who is a Holocaust denier to prevent their children from borrowing books about the Holocaust." — The News and Observer*

When Republicans hijacked H805 as a way to legislate the wishlist of Christian nationalist groups, I worked to expose what they were really doing: limiting academic freedom, promoting censorship in schools, and burdening our educators.

Additional coverage: [NC lawmakers advance bill targeting gender in public schools](#)

## **Protecting our immigrant neighbors**

*My line: "Our constituents sent us here to tackle truly urgent issues, but instead what have we decided today to spend our time on: bullying, stoking fear, solving absolutely made-up problems, pointing fingers, and trying to sell a lie that immigrants are the source of our problems."*

After Republicans pushed forward two anti-immigrant bills, S153 and H318, I worked to expose their hypocrisy about efficiency by building a coalition of sheriffs, faith groups, and advocates to fight back against the bill and the xenophobia behind it.

Additional coverage:  
[NC Senate leaders advance immigration crackdown bill](#)

[NC Senate will vote bill expanding authorities' cooperation with ICE](#)

[NC Senate moves to penalize sanctuary cities limit democratic attorney general](#)

## MY PLATFORM OF CARE IN ACTION

Fighting back isn't my only job. Even though being in the superminority makes passing legislation next to impossible, I'm committed to legislating anyway. I ran on a detailed Platform of Care, and my legislative record reflects my efforts to implement this promise. In my first year in office, I've built a reputation around caring for:

- **Parents and caregivers.** For years, many people had childcare as *a* priority, but for me it's *the* priority. I bring my lived experience to the work and have quickly become one of the Senate's "go-to" authorities on the topic.
- **People power.** I am one of the only people in the entire General Assembly who does not take corporate PAC money. That means I'm beholden to my constituents – not corporations who ask the legislature to do their bidding.
- **Gun Sense.** I have spoken out against every single gun bill that has come up in committee or on the floor, often leading rapid response efforts to mobilize advocates against harmful legislation.

**"Senator Chitlik is a game changer for the NC Senate! She goes head to head with anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQ lawmakers in committee meetings and on the Senate floor. She knows when to lead the charge and when to support our goals. Senator Chitlik is a true reproductive freedom champion for the people of Durham!"**



**Jillian Riley, NC Director of Public Affairs, Planned Parenthood South Atlantic**

- **Our environment.** As the Caucus lead for the Regulatory Reform Committee, I work closely with advocates to make sure that we interrogate the impacts of every bill that comes our way.

- **Reproductive rights.** No one fights harder for reproductive freedom than someone whose life depends on it.

**"In her first session at the NCGA, Senator Chitlik has shown that making sure her constituents have clean water to drink and clean air to breathe is a priority for her. She is an advocate for legislation that safeguards our natural resources and a reliable vote against bills that would remove common sense environmental protections."**



**Brooks Rainey,  
Legislative Counsel,  
Southern Environmental  
Law Center**

## CARING FOR THE HEALTH OF WOMEN, CHILDREN & FAMILIES

As promised, I have relentlessly focused on legislation that tackles the maternal mortality crisis, protects reproductive freedom, and expands essential healthcare, including the following bills:

- **S247 / Redirect Crisis Pregnancy Center Funds**: Redirects funds to organizations like birth centers that actually work to help pregnant women and requires an audit of so-called "crisis pregnancy centers."
- **S352 / Community Health Center Grants for LARCs**: This directs \$2.5M in grants for long-term contraception.

- [\*\*S413 / Right to Use Contraception\*\*](#): Codifies this right to privacy in the wake of overturning Dobbs.
- [\*\*S456 / Healthy Start NC\*\*](#): Replicates Michigan's Rx Kids program, which braids state and Federal funding to provide \$1,500 cash payments in pregnancy to people receiving Medicaid and \$500 monthly cash payments for the first year of a child's life.



- [\*\*S467 / Right to Reproductive Freedom\*\*](#): Codifies abortion rights.
- [\*\*S480 / Paid Family Leave Insurance Act\*\*](#): Sets up a system so that ALL people can have access to paid leave after qualifying events like the birth of a child.
  - [\*\*S563 / Birth Freedom Act\*\*](#): Mandates Medicaid and the state employee's health plan equitably cover out of hospital birth.
  - [\*\*S641 / Reenact Child Tax Credit\*\*](#): Offers per child tax credits to reduce child poverty.
  - Co-Author of the Democratic Caucus' Childcare Omnibus, highlighted in the following section.

I am also honored to be part of the inaugural class of [\*\*National Women's Law Center State Gender Policy Fellows\*\*](#), working to forge intersectional alliances that further cogovernance and gender justice.

## CARING FOR OUR STUDENTS & EDUCATORS

In addition to fighting for accountability for charter schools and recipients of school vouchers, I have also pushed forward bipartisan solutions to expand education and increase educational quality from pre-K through higher education, including:

- [\*\*S208 / SchCalFlex/Durham\*\*](#): Would give Durham Public Schools more autonomy over when school starts and ends.
- [\*\*S371 / Stop Chronically Low-Performing Charters\*\*](#): Would make it more difficult for the worst-performing charters to be reauthorized over and over.
- [\*\*S397 / Invest in Durhams Ed/Athletic Infrastructure\*\*](#): Would allocate \$4.5M to update Durham Public School's essential athletic facilities.

**“Sen. Sophia Chitlik, D-Durham, questioned the provision, saying the authority to approve rules and policies ‘seems to be a constitutional authority for the Superintendent, who’s elected by the people of this state.’”**

*EdNC*

- [\*\*S439 / Moratorium on Opportunity Scholarships\*\*](#): Would freeze the privatization of our public schools.
- [\*\*S473 / Capital for Communities Act\*\*](#): Would push our state to invest existing funds towards human and physical infrastructure for health and education.
- [\*\*S578 / North Carolina CARDINAL Corps Act\*\*](#): Would create a statewide pilot service year program focussed on disaster relief and job training.
- [\*\*S618 / LEAP Act\*\*](#): Creates an endowment for the Division of Childhood and Early Education to safeguard Smart Start from times of instability.
- [\*\*S657 / Keeping Our Coaches Act\*\*](#): Increases the supplement for all middle and high school athletic coaches to at least \$3,000 using sports betting funds.



## CARING FOR OUR DEMOCRACY

I have been a consistent advocate for our constitution and for a fair and free democracy. Here are the bills I introduced this year to safeguard our democracy:

- [\*\*SB107 / Joe Johns Non-Partisan Judicial Elections Act\*\*](#): Makes our judicial elections non-partisan again.
- [\*\*SB241 / H.A.L.L. Accountability Act\*\*](#): Makes redistricting documents public.
- [\*\*SB 347 / Supporting Parents Who Serve Act\*\*](#): Would allow legislators to vote remotely postpartum.
- [\*\*SB385 / Wiz Kids/Slow Pokes Voter Registration\*\*](#): Makes same-day registration possible for all and early registration possible for 16 and 17 year-olds.
- [\*\*SB456 / Automatic Voter Registration\*\*](#): Makes it automatic and easy! (primary sponsor).

**“What other parts of the North Carolina law and our American Constitution are you willing to throw out for Donald Trump?”**

*floor remarks during the redistricting debate*

- [\*\*SB 638 / Fair Maps Act\*\*](#): Creates an independent redistricting commission.

Not a single Democratic bill made it out of committee this year. However, history tells us that Republicans consistently raid our legislation for good ideas. This is great news, as it means many ideas in the bills I introduced have a good chance of making it into future legislation (even they don't have my name on it).



## 4. REAL RESULTS



“As a first-term Senate member and a parent, Sen. Chitlik has hit the ground running - passionately pushing new and innovative and creative ideas on how we can tackle the childcare crisis. She's attended every one of Governor Stein's Task Force on Child Care and Early Education. She's participated on numerous panels. She's talked to a countless number of stakeholders. I can't think of a better partner who has made childcare a priority, and I'm proud to work in partnership with her.”

*Senator Jay Chaudari, Democratic Whip*

## THE CURRENT POLITICAL CONTEXT

The current political environment in the Senate is deeply challenging. The MAGA-fication of the Republican party has created a hostile primary environment for a handful of Republican colleagues, including the most powerful man in the building, President Pro Tempore Phil Berger, who is experiencing the most legitimate primary challenge of his political career. This has led to a focus on divisive social issues and away from substantive policymaking.

The General Assembly is not a meritocracy. Not a single bill co-sponsored by a Democratic Senator made it out of committee this year. Over 700 Democratic bills “died” in committee! Given the political environment, in which Republican leadership is focusing on their far-right primary audience and not on legislation that serves the general public, leadership has essentially forbidden meaningful collaboration with Democrats. Everything goes through “the corner offices,” and even my Republican colleagues struggle to get things done. Accomplishing anything in this environment is challenging even for very experienced Senators, and not a single bill with a Democratic primary sponsor has moved out of committee all year. Every Democratic idea must move through a Republican proxy, and, even then, has a very slim chance of going anywhere.

This is further complicated by the deep acrimony between Republican leadership in the House and Republican leadership in the Senate, which has resulted in very few bills being passed and a complete impasse on the budget and on fully funding Medicaid. Compared with 2023, the General Assembly has passed 35% fewer bills, making this one of the least productive years in legislative history.

Accomplishing anything is a feat, and sometimes, a miracle. Add in the usual freshman year learning curve, and the deck hasn’t exactly been stacked in my favor.

Look, I knew what I was signing up for, and this environment has not been a surprise to me. That’s why I’ve focused on relationship-building, on coalitions, and on pushing forward “the adjacent possible”: ideas that fit into Republican-imposed frames and constraints, but still move us forward.

## CHILDCARE OMNIBUS

Senator Jay Chaudhuri and I co-authored the Democratic Childcare Omnibus bill, a collection of eight bills that represent a comprehensive vision for what we, as Democrats, would do to solve the childcare crisis. They also created a public sandbox of ideas for amendments, the Governor’s Childcare Task Force, and future (Republican-led) legislation. Writing these bills involved countless hours of research, speaking with experts from around the country, collaborating with advocates in our district, and working closely with our amazing non-partisan staff. The bills were:

- [\*\*S592 / Statewide Child Care Investment Act\*\*](#): Creates a \$25M matching program with counties to incentivize the creation of more childcare seats.
- [\*\*S593 / Grant Our Kids Care Act\*\*](#): Provides millions of dollars in childcare subsidies for our childcare providers, so they can go to work.
- [\*\*S594 / Care Center Cost Support Act\*\*](#): Finally and meaningfully increases state childcare subsidy rates.
- [\*\*S677 / SOS \(State Owned Structures\) for Childcare Act\*\*](#): Examines how we can use assets already owned by the state to give providers space for little or nothing.

- [\*\*S678 / Onsite Childcare for State Employees Act\*\*](#)

**Employees Act:** Charters three first of its kind centers.

- [\*\*S680 / Comprehensive Capital for\*\*](#)

**Childcare Expansion:** Creates the nation's first Childcare Finance Agency to bring bankers, investors, philanthropists, corporate partners and providers together to scale local, proven childcare small businesses up to ten sites.

- [\*\*S712 / Caring for Our Caregivers Act:\*\*](#)

Provides categorical childcare subsidy eligibility and income tax exemption for everyone working in a school or in public safety – and pays for it by raising taxes 0.8% on people making \$1M a year or more.

## SUCCESSFUL AMENDMENT

In May, I took language from S677, the SOS for Childcare Act, and ran it as an amendment to [\*\*S528\*\*](#). This amendment was sparked by a childcare provider in our district who faced a TON of red tape in opening her center; the building inspector told her one thing, the city, another, the fire marshall yet another. This led to expensive delays, both for her, and for parents.

I proposed tackling this challenge by bringing stakeholders together to figure out how we can streamline regulatory requirements for



childcare centers. It gets everyone in the same room and asks them to bring their experience to the table to make things easier for childcare entrepreneurs, who already face innumerable hurdles to opening and sustaining their businesses. It also paves the way for thoughtful changes -- done in a way that's safe, clear, and intentional. I figured these professionals would have much better recommendations than we could come up with alone at the General Assembly.

I drafted a part of this bill as [\*\*an amendment\*\*](#), and “ran it up the chain”: to the bill sponsors, to industry experts, to the Chairman of the Rules Committee, and eventually to the Speaker Pro Tempore’s team. I made my case and brought a lot of treats. My colleagues didn’t think it would work, but I always try anything that has a chance to support our district. To everyone’s surprise, I got the go-ahead to run this amendment on the floor, where it passed unanimously!

The bill eventually got merged with another bill, [\*\*H412\*\*](#), and with help from my colleagues across the aisle, my amendment got in the conference report, and to the Governor’s desk.

It was signed into law, and I was able to be there for it! It was an amazing moment, especially because:

- It increased belief in what was possible and gave folks hope. Democrats passing anything (or being allowed) to pass anything is a big deal. It shouldn’t be that way, but it’s true. So if a freshman in the superminority can do it, we ALL can!
- It showed that there is a good faith to work together on childcare. This IS a bipartisan issue – we all agree it’s a problem.
- It created a playbook to try to do it again.

The work group is now meeting, and we expect to have their recommendations soon.



## 5. TAKING BACK POWER

My work in the Senate extends well beyond holding Republicans accountable, working across the aisle to champion real solutions to real problems, and standing up for Durham's values. As you've read, this extends well beyond holding Republicans accountable, working across the aisle to champion real solutions to real problems, and standing up for Durham's values. Whether it's inviting myself to audit task forces I wasn't named to or pressing that green light to speak when Republicans would rather I stay silent, I'm not afraid to show up and speak out. But much of my critical work is behind the scenes, where I'm dedicated to supporting our collective efforts to take back legislative and judicial power. Here's a deep dive into what I'm doing to make sure I leave our politics better than how I found it.

### WE HAVE A PLAN

It can be a challenge to stay present and ferocious, and to sustain that focus for the long term. Here's what we need to do to end gerrymandered Republican control:

1. Take back our courts for justice
2. Break the supermajority in the Senate so that we can restore the Governor's veto power
3. End gerrymandering with fair maps
4. Take back the majority in both houses and fix this mess

Here's the good news: we have a plan. It's a marathon to execute, but it's absolutely possible. Here's what we need to do:

1. In **2024**, we held a critical seat on the State Supreme Court. We will have opportunities to do that again in 2026. In 2028, we have a chance to flip up to three seats on the State Supreme Court, and with it, the balance of power.
2. In **2026**, we are fighting to break the supermajority in the NC State Senate and to gain seats in the NC State House. Both are possible if we work hard!
3. In **2030**, we will have an important census, which will trigger the redrawing of our maps (this is actually supposed to happen only every decade... not five times in six years). It is very likely that those maps will be challenged.



4. In **2032**, voters should finally have court-ordered, fair maps. North Carolinians will likely elect delegations to Congress and to the legislature that are closer to our state's actual partisan makeup:  $\frac{1}{3}$  Democrats,  $\frac{1}{3}$  Republicans, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  Independent (competitive).

## DOING OUR PART

Durham has a huge role to play in that plan, especially in driving turnout to support Democratic State Supreme Court candidates. My role in that marathon is also clear. I have "safe seat responsibility," which means that if I win my primary, my job is to work with you to:

1. **Increase turnout for the general election.** Just as I did in 2024, when I partnered with ten other primary winners to form **Durham Delivers**, a first of its kind effort to drive turnout among sporadic voters, I dedicated enormous time and energy towards driving turnout even after I had "won" my race. I raised six-figures in capital and dedicated dozens of hours a week towards increasing voter turnout and coordination in Durham, leveraging connections and my status as the likely victor to push other safe seat Democrats to do more.

2. **Raise money.** Durham is the moral and financial engine of Democratic politics in our state, and it must become the financial engine of the Senate Democratic Caucus, the primary fundraising vehicle for competitive seats. My goal is to contribute \$50,000 to the caucus and competitive races this biennium. Because I have a front-row seat to these races, I can help to ensure this money will be used effectively and strategically.

3. **Shape the narrative.** Because of how incredibly engaged and progressive or

Durham community is, I can test out ideas that reshape the narrative. For the past two years, I've been prototyping a narrative that centers care. Soon, I will be testing narratives about cleaning up politics, including term limits and campaign finance reform.

**4. Support front-liners.** As a cheerleader, mentor, and financial supporter, my job is to support our front-liners (Senators Bradley, Grafstein, and Everitt) and competitive seat candidates. This means networking media or influencer opportunities, raising money, cheering them on, and highlighting their work.

## BREAKING THE SUPERMAJORITY

A Republican supermajority means that our policy outcomes just don't align with most North Carolinians. Flipping just one seat—or ideally two — fundamentally changes negotiations around budget, education, and pro-family policy. When Republicans know that we have the votes to uphold a veto, they will be forced to bring us to the table.

Breaking the supermajority also restores power to Governor Stein. The House has been deeply unreliable this year in sustaining his vetoes. The Senate historically has been more reliable, but we are one vote short. I often say that we all bought the most expensive house in the nation – a record-breaking \$60M Governor's race – but failed to insure the house with a \$2M policy (roughly what it costs to flip a seat). Now the roof is leaking, and boy, do we wish we had that policy. It's not too late to restore Governor Stein's power for the 2027 Biennium, but the surest way to do that is through the Senate.

We must defend every Democratic seat while identifying GOP districts we can actually contest. [\*\*Senator Woodson Bradley\*\*](#) (Mecklenberg) and [\*\*Senator Terence Everitt\*\*](#)



(Wake Forest) each won their seats by less than 250 votes. Because Republicans have taken over the Board of Elections, they must win these seats by irrefutable margins. Both are excellent Senators, fundraisers, and communicators. Every dollar we invest in them is money well-spent.

Additionally, we have two key flippable opportunities. In Nash and Vance Counties, former House Member and local pastor [\*\*James Gailliard\*\*](#) is running to unseat Senator Lisa Barnes, the author of this year's deeply unpopular Farm Bill. The district is about 48.9% Democratic – a challenge, but a possible one with such a strong candidate and in is poised to be a favorable midterm election for Democrats.

In Cabarrus County, where longtime GOP Majority Leader Senator Paul Newton stepped down at the beginning of the session, [\*\*April Cook\*\*](#) is running to defeat his replacement, Senator Chris Measmer. Demographic change in Cabarrus means that there is potential for a pick-up in a year when Democrats overperform.

Most importantly, our Caucus is under the new leadership of [\*\*Senator Sydney Batch\*\*](#), who was herself a frontline candidate at one point. She is a powerful messenger, an excellent fundraiser, and an empowering leader for our majority female, majority BIPOC caucus, which has members in every generation from their 30s to their 80s. Under Leader Batch, the Caucus is testing new strategies, listening to new voices, and repositioning itself to break the supermajority.





## 6. WHAT'S NEXT

As this long session comes to an end, I've been reflecting on just how high the stakes are, and how much has changed so very quickly. I've learned that I can't force Republicans to govern. But I've worked hard to do everything I can. I've advocated for survivors of Tropical Storm Chantal, and fought for the aid that they deserve. I've collaborated with our major universities, and opened new lines of communication with community advocates. I've built relationships, fought misinformation, and written a lot of really powerful legislation. I've learned a lot very quickly, and have sought to apply that knowledge as fast as I can.

There is still so much more to do, which is why I'm running for reelection in 2026. I would be honored to have your vote.

If reelected, I will continue to work to:

- Implement my Platform of Care, and move forward critical priorities like childcare and meeting peoples' basic needs.
- Put forward policies that reflect the diversity and genius of our community.
- Support you and your neighbors with high-quality constituent services.
- Work "out of the building" to network resources to organizations on the ground here in Durham.
- Fight like hell for our community, and for our values.

Thank you for being a partner in this work to put care back into our politics here in Durham, and across the state. It has been both an immense challenge and an enormous joy to be your State Senator, and I pledge to work diligently to continue to live up to this sacred responsibility.

**TAKE MY 5 QUESTION SURVEY**



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