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TO: Put NC First
FROM: Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group
DATE: April 29, 2020
RE: Key Survey Findings Conducted April 13 to 18 among 800 Likely NC Voters

- 1. While the coronavirus outbreak understandably dominates the dialogue, nationally and of course in North Carolina, and has personally impacted a majority of North Carolinians, current attitudes are somewhat surprising: increased optimism about the state.**

A 54% majority of voters say the state is headed in the right direction (versus 23% wrong track), which is significantly more positive than previous years. This confidence in North Carolina spans partisanship and region, and race: 52% of white voters say "right direction," as do 57% of African-American voters.

- 2. Much of the renewed optimism among North Carolinians is due to strong approval of Governor Cooper and his response to the coronavirus, with overwhelming majorities supporting his actions to stop the spread.**

While President Trump's approval rating remains lackluster (49% approve, 48% disapprove), two-thirds (67%) of voters approve of Governor Cooper's performance (27% disapprove). The Governor's ability to "remain above the political fray" during this crisis is evidenced by his 46% approval rating among Republicans AND Trump voters.

Each of the five actions taken by the governor to stop the spread receives strong support from the electorate, including several with near-unanimous approval:

- 92% approve of stopping all eviction/foreclose court hearings.
- 91% approve of stopping all utility shut-offs for those who cannot pay bills.
- 88% approve of the stay-at-home order.
- 88% approve of closing all schools, restaurants, and bars.
- 71% approve of establishing an online voter registration portal.

Moreover, when directly asked who they trust more to handle the coronavirus situation, a 55% majority select Governor Cooper/state government, compared to just 34% who select President Trump/federal government. By contrast, when asked to choose between the Democrats and the Republicans

in the North Carolina state legislature, there is only a NARROW 39%-to-35% edge for Democrats.

3. Most North Carolinians credit Governor Cooper's decisive actions for mitigating the spread of the coronavirus.

Seven in 10 (70%) voters agree that the governor's aggressive actions/stay-at-home orders have kept the coronavirus under control and that the restrictions should be kept in place so schools/businesses can re-open safely and for the long-term; 25% agree that the governor overreacted, and that while the restrictions on businesses and social interactions served a purpose [*note that we made the opposition "reasonable" by positing that the restrictions worked but have served its purpose*], now it is time to get back to some kind of normal operation.

Notably, 53% of Republican voters agree with Governor Cooper's position on the restrictions; in fact, even 38% of voters who believe there is no coronavirus crisis in the state (a small minority) STILL agree with the Governor's aggressive actions.

4. A significant proportion of North Carolinians are impacted at both the health and economic/fiscal level.

Three-quarters believe that the coronavirus outbreak is already a crisis in North Carolina (52%) or likely to become a crisis (22%), while one-fifth (22%) say it is NOT likely to become a crisis. Every major demographic group strongly believes that the coronavirus outbreak is a crisis, or likely to become one, including three-fifths (63%) of Republicans.

Thirty percent (30%) of voters know someone personally who has had their health affected by the coronavirus, and two-fifths (39%) say they know someone who has suffered a job loss or wage cuts. NO region of the state or voter subgroup is immune from the impact of the coronavirus, but African-American voters have been impacted slightly more: 41% know someone whose health has been affected, and 46% have suffered job loss/wage cuts. In general, 16% of ALL North Carolinians have been affected by health and job loss/wage cuts, while 54% have experienced ONE of these outcomes—illustrating the very real and direct impact on millions of North Carolinians.

5. One important finding with regard to the emerging protests to lift stay-at-home orders is that, at least right now, North Carolinians are strongly focused on protecting their health.

When asked about the coronavirus and their personal situation, 61% say they are MORE worried about health/well-being than financial situation (18%), including a strong majority of Republicans (60% health/well-being, 21%

financial situation) and even a 46% plurality of those who have suffered job loss/wage cuts.

Even when asked to think more broadly about the impact on the state of North Carolina, 46% worry more about health/well-being than about job loss (31%), although it is fair to note that 21% VOLUNTEER that they are worried about BOTH.

6. Finally, looking ahead to the November 2020 elections, other than Governor Cooper enjoying a wide lead (with an expected bump for his leadership during the crisis), the presidential and legislative races remain hotly contested.

Joe Biden holds a slight 48%-to-45% lead over Donald Trump, while the generic legislative vote is similarly competitive with a Democratic lead over Republicans of 46% to 44%. Governor Cooper, on the other hand, leads Dan Forest by 55% to 36%. In the preceding page we noted results among “swing voters,” who are defined as Cooper voters who do NOT support Democrats for the legislative elections; these “swing voters” comprise 13% of the North Carolina electorate, which provides a sizeable number of potential Democratic votes (in general, the demographic composition of swing voters pretty much reflects the overall electorate, although they tend to be a little bit more white than average, and in particular, white women age 18 to 54 and white/non-college-educated women).