



The Carolinas Pandemic Preparedness Task Force reports are dedicated to the over 43,000 North and South Carolinians who have died from COVID-19 since 2020. We also dedicate these reports to the first responders and essential workers who risked and sometimes lost their lives on the front lines, navigating PPE and other supply chain challenges and working tirelessly to provide care during the worst public health disaster this generation has experienced. We were working in “real time” as the pandemic was changing, sometimes for the worse and sometimes for the better.

It is critically important that we recognize the inestimable grief experienced across the Carolinas and beyond. COVID-19 has wrought widespread devastation. Unlike the hurricanes that the Carolinas are practiced at responding to, this disaster was not relegated to certain portions of the state.

And yet . . .

We did, and we do, respond. From neighbors checking in on each other to state leaders holding daily calls to coordinate response efforts, North and South Carolinians stepped up to the task of keeping essential state functions operating, expanding services for those in need, and tracking and tracing COVID-19 data. Sometimes the challenges of the pandemic feel unending, overwhelming, and all-encompassing, but it is critical that we learn from this experience and consider opportunities for continued improvement.

The knowledge we are acquiring during this pandemic could be easily lost to time as today’s responders move to other industries and retire. In light of this, as co-chairs of the Carolinas Pandemic Preparedness Task Force, we urge the documentation of the learnings acquired since 2020 to strengthen future pandemic preparedness and response efforts. What challenges have been unexpected? What goals have not been achieved and why? What partnerships and programs have worked well—how can we fund and scale? How can we prevent the illness and loss of life experienced during COVID-19 during future contagious disease outbreaks?

Together we must build cultures of resilience in North and South Carolina that do not ask more of our residents during times of crisis; rather we must create the infrastructure, preparedness, and response resources that will protect us all.

We would like to thank our task force members, steering committee members, and external contributors for their time and dedication during this process.

And finally, this report is not designed to provide a comprehensive history of the pandemic in our states; instead, it is a report that we hope will be found worthy for the time at which it was prepared.

Harris Pastides, PhD, MPH

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President Emeritus
University of South Carolina

Machelle Baker Sanders, MHA

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Machelle Baker Sanders".

Secretary of Commerce
North Carolina Department of Commerce