



# Ashbrook puts NC on notice with rout of Kings Mountain

SPORTS, 1B

# The Gaston Gazette

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## ‘Enjoy the drinks and stay for the aura’



Jay Woods inside his Aura Cocktail Lounge on West Main Avenue in Gastonia on Sept. 26.

PHOTOS BY MIKE HENSILL/THE GASTON GAZETTE

## Gastonia man opens downtown cocktail lounge

Kara Fohner Gaston Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK

A Gastonia man has opened a cocktail lounge in the city’s downtown.

Jay Woods opened Aura Cocktail Lounge in August, offering signature cocktails and an intimate atmosphere.

“I know so many people travel all the way to Charlotte just to have a drink,” Woods said. “I felt like they needed something here.”

Woods said that he has worked in the nightlife industry his entire life, and he also is a radio personality for Charlotte’s Radio One.

A Gastonia resident, Woods said that he sees downtown as a place that has potential.

“My being a resident of Gaston County, I’ve seen the vision as far as the city expanding,” he said. “I’m really a big fan of the community.”

“I think one of the things that I really enjoyed seeing is how downtown puts their energy into Christmastime, and also how Fourth of July is just a



Inside Aura Cocktail Lounge on West Main Avenue in Gastonia.

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## Bill would fill gap in Medicaid coverage

Chloe Collins  
Gaston Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The North Carolina legislature is currently discussing a bill that would fill the gap in Medicaid coverage left behind by House Bill 125, the state’s approved 2025-27 budget.

On Aug. 6, H125 was signed into law, allocating \$600 million for Medicaid in 2026 and 2027 as opposed to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services’ requested \$819 million per year.

In a letter to service providers, NCDHHS said that in previous years when the state budget allocated \$600 million per year to Medicaid, the remaining needed funds were made up through COVID-19 funding, but that the funding was no longer available.

The letter went on to say that in order to stay within the budget, NCDHHS would need to shave \$319 million off of its operation costs and it planned to implement rate cuts for service providers in order to do so.

Gaston County residents who relied on Medicaid services at the Life Enrichment Center raised concerns over how the funding gap would affect seniors and residents with disabilities, like their loved ones.

The center’s director, Toni Camp said at the time that she was not sure health care providers would be able to continue working with the center if the rate cuts were enforced, which would limit the number of patients it could assist.

However, in its letter, NCDHHS said it informed the North Carolina legislature that the cuts could be reversed if additional funding for the program was allocated.

### New plan

In a recent press release, the legislature announced that it had a “fiscally responsible plan” to fund the Medicaid rebase.

Through Senate Bill 403, it plans to allocate an additional \$192 million for Medicaid, bringing the program total to \$792 million for 2026.

According to the release, the new

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## Battle lines drawn over Confederate monument

Rich McKay  
REUTERS

ATLANTA – The heroic images of three Confederate leaders carved into the granite face of Georgia’s Stone Mountain have towered over the countryside outside Atlanta since the 1970s, paying silent homage to the Southern cause in the Civil War.

Its supporters say the monument – often compared with Mount Rushmore – honors those who fought and died for the Confederacy in the 1861-65 war between the states. But detractors have long viewed it as a defiant symbol of

White supremacy. They say its messaging needs to be openly acknowledged and put into historical context in the interest of racial justice.

To accomplish that, the Republican-controlled state government authorized \$14 million to redesign the museum at the base of the mountain. The aim is to present a more balanced view of what the gigantic bas-relief carving represents.

“The past is ugly,” said the Rev. Abraham Mosley, the first Black chairman of Stone Mountain Park’s governing board, referring to the links between the Confederacy, slavery and the South’s

legacy of racism, which he said the museum currently obscures.

But the project is now facing a lawsuit that could stop it cold just months before it is due to open. The Sons of Confederate Veterans, a group that says it is committed to the “vindication” for the Southern cause, argues that state law stipulates that Stone Mountain must stand as a “tribute to the bravery and heroism” of those who suffered and died for the Confederacy. The redesign, the group says, would dishonor that memory and violate state law.

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Detractors have long viewed the Confederate carving on the face of Georgia’s Stone Mountain as a defiant symbol of White supremacy.

DUSTIN CHAMBERS/REUTERS FILE

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