TAKE 10™

# Power Move #22
# Open Enrollment:
# Know Your Coverage, Keep Your Cash!

**Free Virtual Coaching**

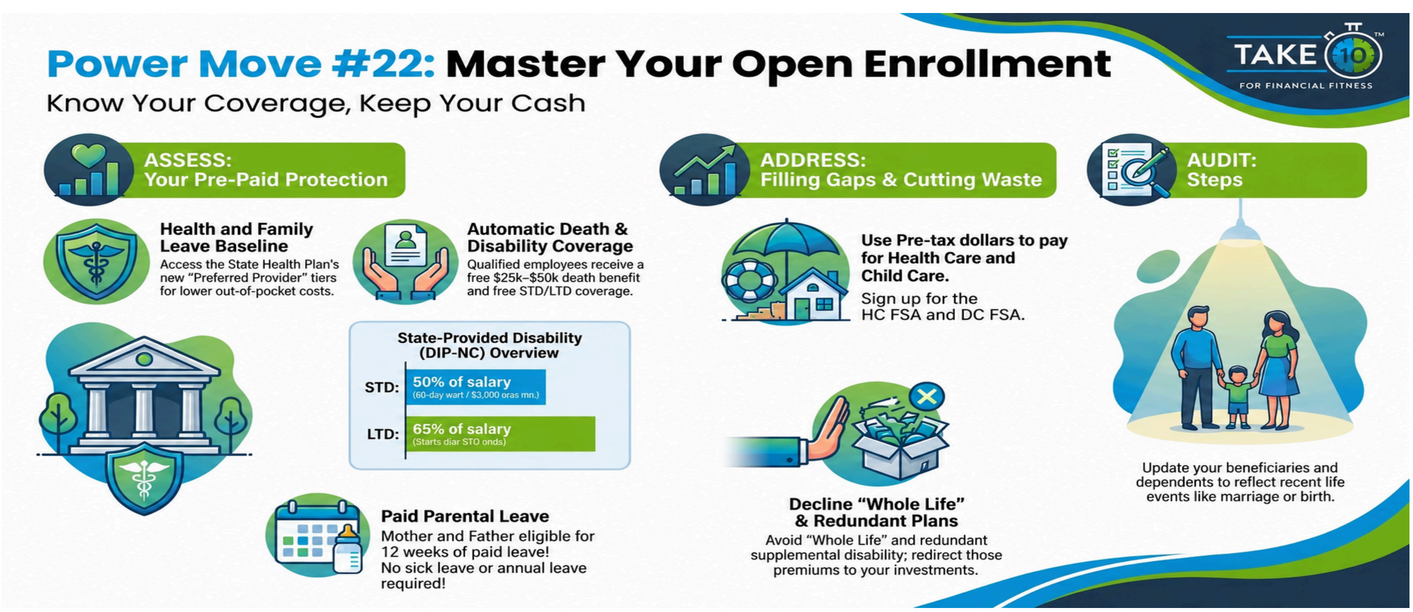
**30-minutes w/ Mr. Norman**

Open enrollment season can feel like a maze of pushy sales pitches, confusing brochures, and fear-based marketing. Insurance should act as a reliable shock absorber for your life, but you should never pay for protection you already have. *Power Move #22* is here to help you navigate open enrollment with confidence.

## Protect Yourself and Your Family

**Assess: What You Already Have** Before a salesperson convinces you to buy a new product, let's take inventory of some of the benefits the State of North Carolina already provides.

- **State Health Plan (SHP):** Access to the heavily subsidized State Health Plan (Standard PPO, Plus PPO, or HDHP), which includes vital coverage like mental health and preventive care. A 2026 Update*:* The state rolled out a new "Preferred Provider" tier system; if you choose in-network providers, you will see significantly lower out-of-pocket costs and deductibles.
- **Retirement (TSERS):** State employees automatically enrolled in this defined benefit pension plan, contributing 6% of pre-tax salary. This replaces a maximum of 54.6% of your AFC (average of your highest four consecutive years of earnings). Access to supplemental 401(k) and 457(b) plans also provided, along with your district's 403(b) plan.
- **Death Benefit**: Once you have made at least one year of contributions to the state retirement system, you automatically qualify for a completely **free** death benefit. If you pass away while in active service, your designated beneficiary will receive a single lump-sum payment: a minimum payment of $25,000 up to maximum of $50,000.
- **Disability Insurance:** If you participate in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS), you are provided with basic short-term disability (STD) and long-term disability (LTD) coverage at *no cost* through the Disability Income Plan of North Carolina (DIP-NC). Evaluate existing employer coverage carefully before purchasing additional disability policies to avoid unnecessary coverages and expenses..



- **Paid Parental Leave**: The state now provides up to **12 weeks of paid parental leave** at 100% of regular pay for **BOTH mother and father**! Expanded Qualifying Events: childbirth, adoption, foster care placement, or a miscarriage or stillbirth that occurs after the 12th completed week of pregnancy. It also fully covers situations where a child passes away after birth. There are no costs associated with this benefit, and **this leave does not deduct from your accrued sick leave or annual leave**!
- **Lantern Surgical Benefit**: Covers over **1,500 planned, non-emergency surgeries** across categories like spine, orthopedic, joint, cardiac, gynecology, general surgery, and bariatrics. Lantern covers travel expenses over 100 miles (reimbursements for mileage, pre-booked 3-star hotels, airfare for 200+ miles, and a $35 daily meal allowance for you and a companion). There are **no premiums, no deductibles, and no copays ($0)** for the surgery for members who use a Lantern provider.

**Address: What You Might Need** Now that you know your baseline, here is what you actually *might* need to purchase to fill the gaps, keeping your long-term security in mind:

- **FSA (Flexible Spending Account)** A flexible spending account (FSA) is an employer-sponsored health benefit. You can use an FSA to pay for IRS-approved medical expenses for yourself, your spouse, and qualifying dependents with tax-free dollars. In 2026, the most you can put into a health FSA is $3,400. If you don't use all the money in your FSA by the end of the year, you may end up losing some or all of those funds.
- **DCFSA (Dependent Care FSA)** a pre-tax benefit account used to pay for eligible dependent care services, such as preschool, summer day camp, before or after school programs, and child or adult daycare. Utilizing an FSA of either type can help reduce overall taxable income by lowering your AGI.
- **Term Life Insurance** (The Death Benefit)**:** Because your benefit is capped at $50,000, this is rarely enough to fully protect a growing family. IF you have dependents, purchasing a 10-, 20- or 30-year "Term Life" policy meets this need, securing a much larger death benefit for relatively little money at a **fixed** (level-term) **rate** for the life of the policy. Consider comparing open market term life options with your employer's supplemental group life offerings to evaluate cost and portability.

## Audit: Check Your Blind Spots Annually

- **Update** your dependents and beneficiaries. Divorce, new child, adoption, and other life events are best addressed sooner rather than later. Be sure your assets are directed as you intend them to be.
- **Evaluate** whether whole life or supplemental plans offered during Open Enrollment align with your overall financial goals before purchasing or renewing premiums. Consider saving and investing any resultant savings of those premium dollars toward leveling up your financial fitness..

## STANDARD PPO & PLUS PPO PLAN
### for Active Subscribers

North Carolina State Health Plan FOR TEACHERS AND STATE EMPLOYEES
A Division of the Department of State Treasurer

| Monthly Premium Rates January 1, 2027 to December 31, 2027 | STANDARD PPO Plan | | | | PLUS PPO Plan | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Salary Band | | | | Salary Band | | | |
| | $50,000 + UNDER | $50,001 - $65,000 | $65,001 - $90,000 | $90,001 + OVER | $50,000 + UNDER | $50,001 - $65,000 | $65,001 - $90,000 | $90,001 + OVER |
| ACTIVE SUBSCRIBERS | | | | | | | | |
| Subscriber Only | $36.76 | $52.52 | $68.28 | $84.00 | $69.32 | $98.72 | $128.12 | $168.04 |
| Subscriber + Child(ren) | $194.28 | $210.04 | $225.80 | $241.52 | $289.84 | $319.24 | $348.64 | $388.56 |
| Subscriber + Spouse | $603.76 | $619.52 | $635.28 | $651.00 | $783.32 | $812.72 | $842.12 | $882.04 |
| Subscriber + Family | $603.76 | $619.52 | $635.28 | $651.00 | $783.32 | $812.72 | $842.12 | $882.04 |