

Resolution in support of Public Education in North Carolina

5.26.23

WHEREAS, public education in North Carolina is in crisis, with tens of thousands of students in classrooms without a qualified teacher due to the underinvestment in teacher compensation and the resultant teacher shortage; and

WHEREAS, starting teacher pay in North Carolina at \$37,000 ranks behind even Alabama and Mississippi, which increased starting pay by 21% and 10%, respectively, last year and Tennessee and Arkansas have announced plans to raise starting teacher pay to \$50,000; and

WHEREAS, the top salary on the North Carolina salary schedule is \$52,680, which a teacher reaches after **25** years in the profession; and

WHEREAS, teachers are paid less than their college-educated peers in other professions— in North Carolina, teachers earn 24.5 percent less than comparable college graduates, a trend which has dire implications for recruitment and retention; and

WHEREAS, the National Center for Education Statistics data on average teacher salaries from reveals that in 1999-2000 the average North Carolina teacher salary was \$39,404 and adjusted for inflation that number is \$65,630 in today's dollars, more than \$11,000 above the current North Carolina average teacher salary; and

WHEREAS, despite being highly qualified, North Carolina teachers are not properly compensated for their work, causing new and old educators to leave the profession; and

WHEREAS, enrollment in teacher-preparation programs has been steadily declining and is down by about a third in the past decade; and

WHEREAS, policies that focus only on starting pay to recruit new teachers ignore the financial needs of experienced teachers and fuel the teacher shortage by failing to address the retention issue; and

WHEREAS, competitive pay is a common-sense solution to attract *and retain* talent in the classroom and we have seen dramatic results from investments in education, as in the North Carolina student pandemic learning loss recovery driven by the \$5B federal government investment; and

WHEREAS, the state of North Carolina currently has several billions dollars of surplus funds which could be used to invest in education; and

WHEREAS, Governor Cooper has proposed a budget which would provide an overall 18% increase for teachers and principals over two years, fully fund the Leandro court-ordered school funding obligation, invest \$1.5B in early childhood initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Governor Cooper's proposed budget would make North Carolina first in the Southeast in average teacher pay - boosting North Carolina's average teacher salary from just over \$57,700 to over \$68,000 including local supplements, move North Carolina from 32nd to 16th nationally in average teacher pay, move North Carolina to 2nd in the Southeast in beginning teacher pay from 11th; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina House legislators are proposing an average teacher salary increase of 10% over two years – an increase that **barely matches inflation**; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Senate budget only offers a 4.5% increase for teachers spread over two years, teachers who have 15 years or more of experience will only receive a raise of \$250 over the two years, and the senate budget proposal contains no investment in PreK expansion, nor does it address the Leandro obligation; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina House budget proposes to strip curriculum standard setting from educators to and give it to a group of legislative political appointees; and

WHEREAS, instead of investing in our public schools, legislators are proposing to pour billions of dollars into vouchers for private schools; and

WHEREAS, in many communities across the state, school districts are the largest employers and the loss of funding to public schools would devastate these communities and their students; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina's future depends on ensuring that all children receive a good education that prepares them to be successful in the jobs of today and tomorrow;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the North Carolina Caucus of Black School Board Members strongly urge the North Carolina General Assembly to make a bold and sustained investment in education by increasing starting teacher salaries to \$50,000 and providing meaningful increases for experienced teachers (minimum increases of 10% /year); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we strongly urge all community members to immediately contact your state legislators and ask them to oppose Senate Bill 406 and House Bill 823 and use public funding only for public schools.

Adopted on May 26, 2023 by the North Carolina Caucus of Black School Board Members.