



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

DANIEL J FOREST LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

December 6, 2019

Greetings North Carolina teachers and school personnel:

You recently received a letter from Governor Cooper about education spending and pay raises. Unfortunately, the Governor has not provided a full picture of teacher pay raises and education spending in North Carolina. I do not know if you have ever received the true story about what has happened with regards to public education spending over the last handful of years, but I felt that it was a disservice to you and your colleagues if you didn't have all those facts.

Prior to the current leadership of the General Assembly taking control in 2011, \$1.25 billion was cut from public education. On top of this massive cut to public education, the previous party still managed to leave the state with a nearly \$3 billion deficit. Teachers were furloughed, overall teacher pay was frozen and education funding remained stagnant for several years. In 2013, my first year in office, the current General Assembly leadership discovered incompetent mismanagement from a previous administration that left North Carolina with another massive budget shortfall of \$500 million in Medicaid cost overruns. Our previous government leaders spent \$1.4 billion more than we had for Medicaid and our costs were 30% higher than other states with similar populations. I tell you all this because the money used to cover the costs of this mismanagement were the same funds that were supposed to go towards teacher salaries. After fixing our broken government and placing North Carolina on strong financial ground, our General Assembly set out to give the respect that our teachers deserved after several years of neglect.

Once our state government overruns were taken care of, your General Assembly made it a priority to unfreeze teacher pay, raise starting teacher salaries, fix an outdated pay scale and invest more into public education. Here are the facts about what we have done for our North Carolina public schools and teachers up until Governor Cooper's most recent veto:

- #2 Ranking in average teacher pay in the Southeast (NC was 48th in the US in 2013)
- #3 fastest rising teacher pay in the US
- #6 in the nation for percentage of state level funding of public education
- 65% of public education costs funded by the state (national average for states is 45%)
- \$8,600 average teacher pay raise
- 20% average percentage teacher pay increase
- 5th consecutive teacher pay raises
- \$5,000 increase in entry level teacher pay
- Career teachers will earn \$237,500+ more in salary under new pay scale
- \$3+ billion more in education spending
- \$2+ billion in rainy day fund (to ensure that education funding doesn't get cut again)
- \$80 million more in textbook spending (previous GA spent only \$2.5 million)
- \$100 million per year investment in school connectivity

- NC became the first state in the country to have every single classroom connected to high-speed broadband.
- \$2.5 million investment in Computer Science

Governor Cooper has:

- Vetoed a 9.9% pay raise in a previous budget
- Vetoed 4.9% worth of pay raises for all teachers, including a \$1,000 bonus this year
 - This would have given teachers almost a 25% pay increase since 2013.
- Vetoed the General Assembly's 6th consecutive education spending package and teacher pay raise
- Vetoed \$91 million in school safety measures
- Vetoed \$4.4 billion in new school construction and repairs
- Vetoed \$1.43 billion in public education spending
- Vetoed \$400 for each teacher to buy school supplies

Now, we can continue to debate about how much is enough for public education, however, the facts speak for themselves and paint a much different picture than the information you are being given by the Governor and the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE). This is the same NCAE who claims to be the ONE VOICE of educators in the state, but of the 100,000 public school teachers only about 5,000 are members (according to a recent State Auditor's report). This is the same NCAE who has been fighting tooth and nail to ensure that you do not receive a pay raise from the state this year for purely partisan reasons. This is the same NCAE who praised the Wake County school board for giving their teachers a half percent raise, while smearing the General Assembly year over year for almost a 20% increase. Does the NCAE really speak for all of you, or would some of you like to have seen your 6th and 7th consecutive raises, school construction funds, school supplies and more school support funds released?

Please know that we will continue to fight for increased teacher compensation and overall public education funding just as we have done for the past six years, as well as in the most recent budget and standalone education funding bills that were vetoed by the Governor. We will continue to do so in a balanced approach that ensures government is not overspending, and we are prepared for any downturns in the economy. We do not want to ever put our state, or you, in a situation like North Carolina went through from 2008-2011, when education spending was severely slashed, and teacher pay was frozen.

Thank you for all that you do for our 1.5 million students and your communities. My office is always open if you have any questions or concerns. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and success through the rest of this school year.

Sincerely,



Dan Forest
Lieutenant Governor
Chairman, NCSBE Special Committee on Digital
Learning and Computer Science