

**Investing in our children today paves the way for a better tomorrow for North Carolina.**

**Public Schools First NC** supports an inclusive, fair, innovative and accountable public education system that nurtures and prepares each child for success in school and life.

Now more than ever, it is imperative to remember that education is essential to democracy, and public schools are the foundation of the American dream and the core of America's strength. Public schools must provide all children with an education, regardless of their race, their gender, their parents' income, or their zip code. With adequate resources and excellent teachers, public schools are the best places to promote student growth and academic achievement. They also bring communities together and are one of the only remaining places where different kinds of people come together with a shared purpose.

Public schools benefit *everyone* — from the students they serve to the businesses that recruit well-educated graduates to the taxpayers who benefit when those graduates give back to the community. Education creates knowledgeable and engaged citizens, nourishing our civic life and fueling a vibrant economy.

**Public Schools First NC is committed to the passage of child-centric legislation based on these critical priorities.**

*Adequate, equitable funding that reflects the national average by 2020*

North Carolina ranks 43rd in the nation for per pupil funding according to the NEA, while Education Week ranks NC 40th with a C- letter grade, earning 70.6 out of 100 possible points. This is unacceptable and cannot create the schools our students deserve. Adequate, equitable funding ensures the optimal classroom environment and learning resources so all children can succeed. Public Schools First NC supports legislation that:

**Raises teacher** and other education professionals pay to the national average by 2020.

**Increases per pupil** spending at or near the national average by 2020.

**Raises principal pay** at or near the national average by 2020. Principals are critical to the culture of our schools. Last year, legislators passed a measure that could cut administrators' pay by as much as \$10,000 per year. We support restoring principal pay based on experience, not school population size and a change to 'performance based' bonuses.

**Increases textbook** spending at 2008 levels (at least 67.15 per student).

**Spends on technology** at levels to match growing needs in classrooms.

**Places teacher assistants** in all K-3 classrooms. This is critical to the goals of having all children reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.

**Provides full and flexible services for low-income students, schools, and districts.**

**Gives local school districts school calendar flexibility.**

**Restores class size caps for grades 4 and 5.**

### *Programs and compensation that encourage recruitment, preparation, support and retention of professional, experienced educators*

North Carolina's long reputation as an educational leader and the quality of our public schools has made it attractive to new families and businesses. A successful public school education depends on quality public school teachers. Enrollment in the UNC system's teacher prep programs has dropped 30% since 2010. North Carolina should consider these issues to help restore its teacher pipeline:

**End pay for performance strategies** – Teachers should not receive bonuses in certain grades based on certain tests when all students' scores reflect their cumulative experiences throughout their school careers.

**Allow due process rights** for new teachers and those without career status.

**Restore relevant master's** and other advanced degree pay for those not covered since 2013. This can improve stability and reduce turnover while supporting committed teachers.

**Reinstate longevity pay for all teachers**, the same as all other state employees.

**Increase the salary and compensation** for education support Professionals.

**Evaluate teachers fairly** using a variety of tools not just student test scores.

**Eliminate A-F grading system** or improve it to consider student growth.

**Invest in teacher training programs** to address teacher shortages. Provide incentives for college students to choose education as a major and encourage diverse applicants to enroll.

**Increase mentoring support** and professional development, especially for new teachers.

### *Universal access to high-quality pre-school, so each child comes to school “kindergarten ready”*

Research overwhelmingly supports high-quality pre-kindergarten programs as a means of preparing the highest-risk children for success in grades K-12. These advantages from attending Pre-K last throughout elementary school, holding steady or growing at each grade level, for both high- and low-income students. Yet, approximately 7,000 children remain on our Pre-K waiting lists. Experts suggest that many eligible children do not even apply due to the long waiting list.

In February 2018, the legislature passed HB 90. This bill increases funding for pre-kindergarten with a goal of eliminating the state's waiting list for the program over the next four years. The funds for the extra Pre-K slots is coming from one-time funds. Public school and child advocates are encouraged to request that these costs be included as a part of the next biennium budget. We will continue to monitor the need for Pre-K slots and the appropriation of funds to ensure that both are adequate to meet the needs now and over the next four years.

Public Schools First NC applauds this allocation, as we firmly believe that fully funding universal pre-kindergarten reduces disparities in student achievement tied to socioeconomic status. Universal Pre-K will provide lifelong, positive results for children, their communities, and our state.

### *Provide safe learning environments for our students and teachers*

Every child, every teacher, every school personnel member is entitled to a safe environment at school. No one should live with the fear that sending their kids to school may be placing them in harm's way. No school staff should feel his or her lives are in jeopardy for simply showing up at work.

Public Schools First NC supports legislation that works towards creating safe, secure schools for all our students and teachers including:

**Keep guns off** school grounds and out of K-12 classrooms. Guns have no place at school unless being carried by trained and licensed school resource officers.

**Increase the number** of counselors, social workers, school psychologist, nurses, and school resource officers in schools based on national standards.

**Implement required** violence prevention and threat-reporting programs at all schools.

**Increase** funding for school security as determined by local school districts.

**Strengthen** background checks governing gun ownerships and registration.

**Educate children** and their parents on gun safety/safe storage.

### *Exclusive use of public funds for public education.*

Public Schools First NC believes taxpayers' education dollars belong in properly accountable and transparent public institutions, not delivered by disparate mechanisms to private and for-profit entities that do not guarantee adequate educational outcomes for children. Therefore, North Carolina should:

**Place a moratorium on funding vouchers** that give taxpayer money directly to private schools without appropriately ensuring student safety and educational achievement while documenting that these tax dollars are used appropriately.

**Allow local education authorities to create and administer charter schools**, rather than requiring that private boards govern charters. If charters are to develop and disseminate best practices, districts should have the freedom to create and run them to serve the unique needs of their student base and communities.

**Allow local school boards the same flexibility as charter schools.**

**Institute accountability measures for charter schools, voucher schools, lab schools and the Innovative School District** so that taxpayers can see where and how tax dollars are spent, as well as how successful these schools are for the students they serve.

**Strengthen oversight in Education Savings Accounts.** These accounts take money directly from public schools and give it to parents who opt out of the system with no real control over how they spend it or assurances of any educational gains/benefits for students.

### *Adequately fund the class size mandate and allocate funds for school construction and renovation*

**Put a referendum on the fall 2018 ballot for a statewide public school construction** to help address the growing capital building needs.

A 2016 Blue Ribbon Study estimated that local school boards will require \$8 billion of funding, primarily for new schools and renovations that are needed by 2021. HB90 has delayed immediate classroom space needs; however, it does not address new construction and school renovation costs needed to meet the mandate for lowering class sizes about the next four years. HB90 did add enhancement teacher funding but additional funding is required to completely fund the mandate's requirement. We hope that school infrastructure will be a major focus of this year's legislative session, starting May 16, 2018. Two bills, [H866](#) and [S542](#), are calling for a statewide school construction bond and are eligible for



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consideration. The current bills call for a \$1.9B bond, far short of the estimated needs for the Blue Ribbon Study and the rough estimates given by school districts for adding class space for reducing K-3 class sizes.