



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

January 21, 2022

The Honorable Deanna Ballard
North Carolina Senate
300 N Salisbury St, Rm 521
Raleigh, NC 27603

Via Electronic Delivery

Sen. Ballard,

I am writing in response to your letter dated January 19, 2022.

The past two years have been challenging for many of our state's residents, but especially for our children. Educators in all schools – both public and non-public – have responded to these unprecedented challenges with grace, flexibility, and determination. They have worked diligently to ensure that all students have been safe and have continued to learn. All of our educators deserve our thanks and recognition.

As is clear in the proclamation requested by the NC Association of Public Charter Schools and issued by our office, school choice is not just about public schools vs. non-public schools. It is about students and families having high-quality educational options and the necessary information they need to make informed decisions about those options. In addition to public charter schools, many of our state's public school districts offer families a variety of schools of choice, such as magnet schools and early college high schools. The Governor has long been supportive of this type of innovation in our public schools and public charter schools.

As you know from the Governor's budget proposals, he opposes and will continue to oppose the expansion of the Opportunity Scholarship

program. Our state has a constitutional obligation to ensure every student has access to a sound basic education. Unfortunately, the Opportunity Scholarship program provides public funding to unaccountable non-public institutions for the education of students. The current structure of the program does not allow for any meaningful accountability for student outcomes. In fact, the Opportunity Scholarship Program is the only program of its kind nationally that is not structured to allow for a rigorous evaluation of student performance. The Governor did propose in his budget some common sense changes to the program that would have increased accountability. This lack of accountability, though, means parents do not have the necessary information they need to make an informed choice about what school is the right choice for their children.

Instead of expanding unaccountable voucher programs, we need to be making the necessary investments in our public schools – the investments outlined in the Comprehensive Remedial Plan – that will ensure all of our students have access to a sound basic education. Those investments will not only help to strengthen our traditional public schools, but our public charter schools as well. During budget negotiations, the Governor did propose a number of common sense changes that would have increased accountability and given students and parents better results. Unfortunately, they were not adopted by the legislative leadership. We are willing to work with you to make those changes because that lack of accountability means parents don't have the necessary information they need to make informed choices about what school is right for their children.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Coltrane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Geoff Coltrane
Senior Education Advisor
Office of Governor Roy Cooper

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