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Resolution to Prioritize Public Schools in 2023-25 Biennial Budget

WHEREAS, the state of North Carolina is consistently ranked high nationally for its healthy business climate and was recently ranked the #1 state for business; and

WHEREAS, to maintain North Carolina's economic competitiveness, our state needs a well-educated workforce that can fill the jobs available today and the ones created tomorrow; and

WHEREAS, a strong K-12 public education system is the key to North Carolina's continued success and to ensuring our students are fully prepared to participate in that workforce and are well-informed, contributing members of their communities; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina's constitution requires that the state ensures that all children have the opportunity to receive a sound, basic education; and

WHEREAS, public education is the most important investment the state makes; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly is currently finalizing a state budget for the 2023-25 biennium; and

WHEREAS, study after study confirms that the most important factor in student success is the classroom teacher; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina is currently facing a teacher shortage crisis with more than 5,000 teacher vacancies, leaving tens of thousands of students without a qualified teacher and putting those students' success at risk; and

WHEREAS, neighboring states have passed us in teacher pay, leaving North Carolina ranked 32nd nationally in average teacher pay and 46th nationally and 11th in the Southeast in beginning teacher pay, which is causing teachers to leave for other states and other jobs; and

WHEREAS, the Senate's budget proposal includes a 4.5% salary increase for teachers over the biennium, including only $250 over two years for veteran teachers, and the House budget proposal includes a 10% salary increase for teachers over the biennium; and

WHEREAS, our public schools need significant increases in funding to provide competitive pay to successfully recruit and retain qualified teachers; and

WHEREAS, investments in early childhood education and child care helps to set young children on a path to success in school, allows parents to go to work, and helps businesses find and keep employees; and

WHEREAS, a recent NC Chamber Foundation survey found that 80% of North Carolina voters say the lack of child care is a problem that will not solve itself and that improving quality and making child care more affordable is a good use of taxpayer money, and that 87% of voters say taking action to ensure more working families have access to affordable, quality child care should be an important priority for North Carolina this year; and

WHEREAS, the Senate budget proposal includes no state funding for child care stabilization grants or the expansion of Smart Start or NC Pre-K, and the House budget proposal includes only minimal funding to increase the childcare subsidy rate and for expansion of Smart Start; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina parents already have great choices when it comes to their child's K-12 education, whether that's public schools, public charter schools, or private schools; and

WHEREAS, parents have shown their appreciation for our public schools by "voting with their feet;" nearly 8 in 10 of North Carolina's school-aged children attend public schools; and

WHEREAS, the state's private school voucher program, the Opportunity Scholarship program, currently provides taxpayer funding to students from low- to moderate-income families to attend a K-12 private school; and

WHEREAS, bills in the House and Senate and the Senate's budget proposal are seeking to radically expand the private school voucher program by opening eligibility for the program to all students, regardless of family income or if the student currently attends a private school; and

WHEREAS, expanding the private school voucher program in this extreme way will result in steep cuts to our public schools, harming the educational opportunities students, especially in rural and lower wealth counties; and

WHEREAS, in 2026-27 alone, if the private school voucher program is expanded, our state's public schools could lose more than $200 million in state funding, and

Montgomery County could lose $500,000 or 4% in state funding, with hundreds of millions lost in coming years; and

WHEREAS, research on private school voucher programs in other states demonstrates that students who moved to private schools fell academically behind their peers who stayed in public school; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina has zero evidence of student outcomes for those enrolled in the Opportunity Scholarship Program—the only program of its kind in the nation that doesn't require rigorous evaluation of student performance.

NOW THERFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

That the Montgomery County Board of Education requests that the North Carolina General Assembly prioritize our public schools by

1. Making significant investments in teacher salary increases of at least 18% over the next two years to make North Carolina 1st in the Southeast in average teacher pay; and

2. Making significant investments in early childhood education and child-care through more funding for child-care stabilization grants, child care subsidies, and NC Pre-K and Smart Start; and

3. Stopping the unlimited expansion of the state's private school voucher program that drains money from public education and increasing accountability for private schools participating in the program.

Adopted by the Montgomery County Board of Education, this 5th day of June 2023.

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Chairman

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Secretary