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For Immediate Release - Senator Joyce Waddell's School District Division

Jyrita Moore (Sen. Joyce Waddell) [Waddelljla@ncleg.net]

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, March 16, 2018

From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate

Mecklenburg County



CONTACT: Sen. Joyce Waddell
(919) 733-5650
Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net

School District Division


Charlotte, NC – On March 13, the Joint Legislative Study Committee on the Division of Local School Administrative Units met to study the effects of dividing school districts in North Carolina. Since 2000, at least 71 communities in 21 states have attempted to separate from larger school districts, with 47 being successful. Representatives from the State Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the State Board of Education warned committee members of legal, constitutional, transportation, and budgeting challenges that school district breakups may face.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg has approximately 147,000 students. According to Kevin Harrison, the Transportation Services Section Chief of DPI, splitting the school district would increase transportation costs. Currently, Charlotte uses fewer school buses per student than other school districts. Dividing the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools district would require 111 to 314 more school buses at a cost of \$9.4 million to \$26.7 million. Nathan Maune, an architect in DPI's School Planning Section, explained that splitting school districts could also reduce school choice. It could prevent separate school districts from having comparable aging and quality facilities. School district division could also lead to higher insurance costs; reduce efficiency in school nutrition programs; and conflict with the state's obligation to provide students a sound, basic education.

Brian Gwyn, the staff attorney and legislative analyst for the General Assembly informed legislators that school district breakups could lead to segregation. In Jefferson County, Alabama, the city of Gardendale wanted to separate from the county system and form its own district. Leaders of the movement argued that black students from outside the city were attending Gardendale's schools and expressed worries about changes in demographics. A three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals blocked Gardendale's request due to racially discriminatory intentions. A desegregation order was placed in Jefferson County against the secession. North Carolina's school districts are not under desegregation orders.

Senator Joyce Waddell is in constant communication with the leadership of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. **“The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools system does not need to consider returning to an argument ruling from Brown vs. Board of Education, which clearly states, “school segregation is unjust and morally wrong.” It is my hope that as the committee moves forward, we will focus on measures ensuring that all students in North Carolina receive a sound, basic education. Our students are the future of North Carolina and this great country,”** said Senator Waddell.

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