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For Immediate Release

Sen. Joyce Waddell [joyce.waddell@ncleg.net]

Sent: Friday, July 12, 2019 4:30 PM

To: [Steve Johnston](#)




From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, July 12th, 2019

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Growth vs. Achievement Measures of School Performance

Charlotte, NC- The long Senate Session is slowly coming to a close. Each day this week there were over thirty bills on the calendar; however, the Senate only voted on about half.

Some featured a lot of debate and discussion, including:

House Bill 683: Combat Absentee Ballot Fraud. There were five amendments proposed for this bill on the floor, four of which passed with little opposition, and one of which was voted down by tabling. As passed, the bill increases protections against absentee voter fraud, and restores the last Saturday of early voting.

House Bill 362: 15-Point Scale for School Performance Grades, which will make important changes to how North Carolina grades schools, passed Tuesday morning in a unanimous vote. The state has been using a 15-point grading scale since 2015, in which schools that score above 85% receive an “A,” above 70% receive a “B,” etc. Our educators believe this has created more meaningful categories than the previous 10-point scale, but the scale was set to revert to 10-points this year before this bill went through.

Senator Waddell was happy to see this change made, but also hoped to make additional improvements to how North Carolina grades schools. Currently, school performance scores are an average of achievement scores weighted at 80%, and growth scores weight at 20%. Senator Waddell proposed an amendment to weight achievement at 51%, and growth at 49%. While achievement is important, prioritizing it above growth makes it difficult to distinguish between schools that significantly improve test scores but fail to meet achievement thresholds, and those that make little progress at all, especially for low-income schools.

Unfortunately, Senator Waddell’s amendment was voted down by tabling in a 28-21 vote. However, House Bill 362 does direct the State Board of Education to study school performance scores, so hopefully the Board will recommend giving more weight to growth. “A school’s performance score should reflect the quality of its teachers and administrators, not the income level of its students,”

said Senator Joyce Waddell.

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