

For Immediate Release



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

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Greetings:

The General Assembly's traditional budget-adjusting session began May 18. It has been stated that legislators are aiming to complete session by July 1.

Joyce Waddell

Offender Voting

The state's full Court of Appeals has been asked to temporarily block a ruling allowing certain felony offenders to vote while they appeal the case. In August 2021, when the legal battle began, a judicial panel struck down a 1973 North Carolina law that bars felony offenders from voting while serving active sentences — including if they are on probation or parole. The judges found the law disproportionately affected Black residents and originated from an era of white supremacy in the 19th century.

The ruling opens the door for people convicted of felonies to register and vote once they are out of prison, or if they never received a prison sentence. That could affect over 56,000 people.

After the ruling was filed, GOP leadership filed an appeal and asked for the ruling to be placed on hold while their appeal is heard. In a split 2 -1 decision last week, a three-judge panel granted a partial win. The panel said the ruling could be kept on hold through the May and July primaries, but would be allowed to take effect for the November election. The three-judge panel was made up of two Democratic judges, and one Republican

Plaintiffs in the case include the North Carolina NAACP, Justice Served NC, Community Success Initiative, and Wash Away Unemployment. Their attorneys say restoring voting rights for people convicted of felonies who are out of prison would represent the largest expansion of voting rights in North Carolina since the 1960s.

The argument to prevent anyone from voting is an unfair one. The US Constitution was put in effect to allow those who are taxed (which covers almost everyone) to be counted. This thinking has been changed over the years, with some continuing to fight against it.

Charter Schools

This coming fall marks 25 years since charter schools first began opening in North Carolina during the 1997-1998 school year. While enrollment at traditional public schools fell during the pandemic, the percentage of North Carolina students attending charter schools grew. Charter schools now serve 8.8% of all public school students and account for \$9.1 million of the state education budget, said the Office of Charter Schools.

Last week, the Office of Charter Schools presented an annual report on charter schools to the North Carolina state board of education that will be submitted to the General Assembly. Here are five details from the report.

1. The total number of charter schools has doubled since the General Assembly lifted the state's cap on charter schools in 2011.

2. 21 charter schools have had their charters revoked by the state board of education.

3. Charter schools serve a smaller percentage of English language learners, students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students compared to traditional public schools.

4. Ethnic and racial demographics at charter schools are similar to the general public school population, except for Hispanic students.

5. A grant program is helping charter schools become more diverse.

No matter the reason for their existence, we need to ensure the charter schools will be regulated by the same guidelines as traditional school.

Social Work

North Carolina Superintendent and State Board of Education members say they all agree on the need to hire more school social workers but they are split on how to pay for them.

On Thursday, the state board will vote on asking the General Assembly to provide \$15 million during this year's short session to hire 115 school social workers. State board members cited issues students are facing such as rising cases of suicide, depression and school violence. NC school system has one social worker for every 1,300 students. The nationally recommended ratio is one social worker for every 250 students. "Social workers, we feel, are the key ingredient to the total enhancement of a child's well-being," a state board member said during Wednesday's discussion of the budget proposal.

Senator Waddell is working tirelessly for Senate District 40, but she cannot do this alone. In November she will have an opponent running against her. Can she count on your help to continue working for the district?

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It is with great joy that I extend congratulations to all candidates

who have been successful in the recent primaries. All of your hard work paid off.

For the candidates that were unsuccessful during this primary election, you should take great pride and joy that you worked towards accomplishing your goals, and know that your future is full of possibilities.

Although it is not official in date as of yet, the summer heat is in full effect. The temperature has risen and we need to stay hydrated.

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