

## Office of Senator Natasha R. Marcus



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### **Senator Natasha Marcus's Statement on the Short Session Budget**

**Raleigh, NC** – State Senator Natasha Marcus (D-Mecklenburg) provided this statement following the Senate's vote on the 2022-23 Short Session budget ([House Bill 103](#)):

“During the NCGA Short Session, we had an opportunity to advocate for working families across the state who are still recovering from the pandemic and dealing with increased costs due to inflation. The budget writers missed that opportunity and instead presented a budget that falls far short of what North Carolinians need and deserve.

First, the budget squirrels away \$1 billion in a new creation that Republicans call an Inflation Reserve Fund for the state to use later, without giving teachers and state employees enough for them to keep up with inflation and save for themselves. Educators and State workers are already leaving their jobs for better pay elsewhere and we have significant difficulty filling these positions. These tiny 1% raises do not even keep up with inflation.

The budget finally moves to \$15/hour for non-certified school employees, which is too little too late, since most private employers are offering at least \$15/hour starting wage and the average in North Carolina is about \$21/hour (and even higher in counties like Mecklenburg).

The budget funds only about half of what the *Leandro* Plan requires for FY22-23 in order to provide all children in North Carolina with a sound, basic education. The budget also unfairly disadvantages Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools by cutting CMS out of the salary supplement provisions. CMS has many unfilled positions and needs assistance as much as any other district in the state to fill those positions.

While underfunding public education, the budget includes a lot more money for private school vouchers and allows wealthy families to send their children to private school with taxpayers' money, including families of four who make up to \$103,000 per year. The opportunity scholarships are already funded way beyond demand, yet the budget increases those appropriations by millions each year. To compare public vs. private school funding, this budget increases public school funding by only 6% and private school funding by 59%.

I also object to the massive spending to support the fake medical clinics known as crisis pregnancy centers. There is \$3,085,000 more to fund these organizations whose mission is to shame pregnant women, lie to them, preach to them, and dissuade them through any means necessary from choosing abortion. That money should be going to evidence-based healthcare providers and clinics, so that women facing an unexpected pregnancy can get real, honest help and information about all of their options.

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Republicans know what resources the NC Board of Elections needs to conduct fair, safe and secure elections. But they have nevertheless refused to fund the bare minimum. This budget will force the elimination of employees who protect our election system from cyber-attacks and make online voter registration and other services available.

Republicans also refused to give North Carolinians a break on gas prices with a rebate as Democrats proposed in [SB897](#).

This budget keeps in place the unfair cap on Powell Bill funding for Charlotte, undermining the city's ability to maintain our streets and bridges.

Republicans included lots of money for projects in their own districts but have refused to include any of my district's needs, not even a mere \$150,000 to research why there are so many cases of ocular melanoma, a rare cancer of the eye, in the Huntersville area. It's offensive that budget writers refuse year after year to spend a single penny to help us solve this medical mystery.

Finally, I am disappointed that Republicans put this budget together without any Democratic input, in private meetings for weeks, with no Democratic members allowed in the room. Then they presented it via a conference report, so we could not even offer amendments. It's no surprise that it ignores so many needs in the blue areas of our state and ignores so many things that Democrats care about – like Medicaid expansion to close the healthcare coverage gap, funding for public education per the court order in *Leandro*, fair and secure elections, and helping working families make ends meet.

This budget is inadequate in so many ways. I voted no.”

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