

## For Immediate Release



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**Date** 2023-01-02 20:16



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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, January 02, 2023  
Chapter IV  
Volume 1

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## Greetings:

*Happy New Year! The long session for the 2023-2024 biennium begins on January 11, 2023. Newly elected legislators will be sworn in on that date. Those of us who have been re-elected look forward to welcoming our new colleagues and getting down to the business of creating a new budget for North Carolinians.*

*Joyce Waddell*

## PRISON BOOKS

The NC Women's Prison Book Project has sent books to various detention facilities across the state for the past 10 years. For those involved, it is an act of direct service that can help break the isolation that prison and jail creates for incarcerated individuals. It has been reported that it provides a much needed resource, which is an intellectual stimulation and escape.

In North Carolina, the number of women in jails increased 18-fold from 1970 to 2015, according to the Vera Institute of Justice. There was also a fivefold increase in the number of women in prison from 1978 to 2017. Together, more than 3,500 women are housed in the state's prisons and jails out of a total incarcerated population of around 55,000. The NC Women's Prison Book Project is reaching a small portion of them.

I believe that providing good books to those who are incarcerated will provide a great resource for them to strengthen their reading skills. I am excited about any avenue that allows them to learn. It has been proven that reading is important because it improves our focus, memory, empathy, and communication skills. Reading can reduce stress, improve our mental health, and help us live more productive lives. Reading also allows us to learn new things to help us succeed in our work and in relationships.

As a member of the Senate Prison Safety Committee, I will always advocate for more opportunities to assist with reading materials for those who are incarcerated.

## The Cost of Higher Education

Should we be worried about the economy and how the global pandemic upended the traditional university experience? Well, it has been reported that a growing percentage of university students worry higher education is no longer worth the cost.

That anxiety is one main factor in falling admissions at some UNC campuses, leading system leaders to scramble for solutions: Raising the cap on admissions from out-of-state students, simplifying the transfer of credits between institutions, launching new investments in online education, and renewing an emphasis on the value of the state's community college system are some things being put in place.

A former head of the state's community college system, has repeatedly discussed the importance of understanding the benefits, mostly financial, students can expect for what they and their families spend when getting a degree within the UNC system. The financial emphasis unsettles those who worry that programs in the humanities, performing arts and social work programs might lose funding or even be eliminated because graduates of those programs do not tend to make as much money as students in some other majors.

With the high cost of everything, getting an education must be emphasized. We must find a way to make getting an education affordable to all who wish to receive a higher education. Even if some do not go to a 2 or 4 year community college or university, we need to develop certificate programs to allow our citizens to have marketable skills that companies require.



### **Senator Waddell Gets COVID Booster**

In effort to stay safe, Senator Waddell gets her 4th COVID booster.

*Now that the holidays are behind us we can get back to normal scheduling. I hope you made some resolutions that include getting up to date with your COVID and Influenza boosters.*

*If you have not already, please consider getting vaccinated and practice safety around your family by washing your hands and wearing masks in public places with large crowds.*

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