

## For Immediate Release



**From** Sen. Joyce Waddell <joyce.waddell@ncleg.net>  
**To** <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>  
**Reply-To** <joyce.waddell@ncleg.net>  
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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate  
Mecklenburg County

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CONTACT: Sen. Joyce Waddell  
(919) 733-5650  
[Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.gov](mailto:Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.gov)  
<https://joycewaddell4nc.com/>



**Greetings:**

At the General Assembly  
*For the Week*

*Merry Christmas!*

*Thank you for supporting me throughout the year. I hope you and your family have a blessed holiday season and as always, enjoy your friends and family.*

*Joyce Waddell*

## Private Schools

North Carolina has been one of the fastest-growing states in enrollment for private schools and charter schools since the COVID-19 pandemic. The state had the nation's fifth-highest growth in private school enrollment since the 2019-20 school year, according to data released Tuesday by the Associated Press. During that same time period, North Carolina had the third-highest growth rate in the nation in charter school enrollment, according to a report released last week.

The growth in charter schools and private schools coincides with continuing declines in enrollment in traditional public schools. It is a trend that could accelerate with state lawmakers approving universal private school vouchers and making it easier for charter schools to get approved and to add more students.

I am a strong supporter of traditional public schools. We must continue to fully fund our traditional schools to provide a great education for our students.

North Carolina's private schools added 22,809 students between the 2019-20 and 2022-23 school years. During that same time period, the number of students receiving Opportunity Scholarships more than doubled. Also, during that time period, North Carolina's charter schools added 22,308 students.

North Carolina's 19% growth rate since the start of the pandemic was behind only Texas and Florida, according to a new study by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Charter schools are considered to be public schools but are exempt from some of the rules that traditional public schools must follow. Homeschooling has also increased in North Carolina since the pandemic.

The extent of the growth is unclear due to how the state has been removing thousands of families who had never submitted paperwork saying they were no longer homeschooling. The growth rates for charter schools and private schools soared during the 2020-21 school year, when traditional public schools were largely in remote learning due to COVID-19. Many private schools and charter schools were quicker at reopening for in-person classes than traditional public schools.

Even after traditional public schools returned to in-person learning, private schools and charter schools have retained their additional students. There is no indication that the trend away from traditional public schools will slow down.

The 2024-25 school year coincides with new rules that eliminate family income limits for the Opportunity Scholarship program. There will also no longer be a requirement that voucher recipients had to have previously attended a public school.

I am very concerned about these changes, and I will work very hard to strengthen our traditional public schools.

## ***Black Political Caucus***

*Senator Waddell along with other NC state Senators participates at a Black Political Caucus holiday event.*



## COVID-19 Increase

Wastewater analysis from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that COVID-19 could be increasing in North Carolina. Wastewater analysis is seen as the best method currently for tracking the virus. The CDC's website reports, "wastewater monitoring can detect viruses spreading from one person to another within a community earlier than clinical testing and before they go to their doctor or hospital. It can also detect infections without symptoms. If you see increased Wastewater Viral Activity Levels of SARS-CoV-2, it might indicate that there is a higher risk of infection."

The latest wastewater analysis shows an increase in virus particles concentrated in the midwest, North Carolina and the northeast. The good news is that most people in the United States have some combination of natural and vaccine-created immunity against the virus. Hospitalizations caused by COVID-19 remain low throughout most of the country.

In addition to coronavirus, cases of the flu and RSV have the medical community on high alert.



### Program Speaker

*Senator Waddell presents words of encouragement to event participants and receives an award from the O.E.L. Legacy Scholarship Foundation during their end of 2023 event, honoring grandparents and community supporters.*



Senator Waddell is working tirelessly for Senate District 40, but she cannot do this alone. Her precincts have changed because of redistricting. Can she count on your help to continue working for the district?

**[CLICK HERE TO](#)**

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***Elections are important to communities, if you know someone who is not registered to vote, please encourage them to do so. It is also important to get our registered voters out to the polls. Please do not forget ID is now required to vote.***

### Vaccines

*According to the NC Department of Health and Human Services, respiratory issues and viruses are rising. Please be careful when moving about the community.*

*Vaccines are a necessity for good health. Getting vaccinated is vital for keeping North Carolinians healthy. Get vaccinated as soon as possible.*



Sen. Joyce Waddell, District 40 | 1113 Legislative Building, Raleigh, NC 27601

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