

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Support adequate funding for public education and oppose school vouchers

**To the Editor:** The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization focusing on voter education and services and engaging voters of all ages in participatory democracy. We advocate on issues we have thoroughly studied or that have been studied by the state or national League. We have studied the issue of vouchers and adequate funding at the state and national level and we oppose the use of public monies to fund private schools through vouchers. We oppose HB 823 and SB 406, currently before the NC Legislature. These bills, if passed in their current format, will distribute up to \$7,000 per student in the form of "Opportunity Scholarships." These monies will come from the budgets of local school districts. The Office of Management and Budget estimates that Henderson County Public Schools would lose \$2 million dollars. Polk County would lose \$120,000 and Transylvania would lose \$557,000.

Opportunity Scholarships are not means tested. They are available to all without consideration for parental income. A very wealthy individual would be eligible as would a poor one. In addition, private schools have virtually no accountability requirements.

Public schools must offer a curriculum which meets or exceeds state academic standards and must publish that curriculum. They must employ certified teachers. All employees must undergo a background check. Public schools must publish teacher qualifications, anonymously of course. They must publish their sources of funding and what percentage of their funds go directly to the classroom. They are reviewed and assessed regularly as are their students who must pass state standardized tests annually.

Private schools have none of these requirements. They may refuse admittance to any student and do not have to account for any students outcomes.

This diversion of public education funds would come at a time when funding for public education in

North Carolina is at an all time low, North Carolina is now 50th out of the 50 states in the nation in funding for public schools. Teacher salaries are \$12,000 below the national average.

Statewide there are now 5,000 teacher vacancies and the number is growing. Both the Senate and House appropriations bills are woefully inadequate in addressing these needs. North Carolina public education is in crisis. We encourage citizens to support adequate funding for public education and oppose school vouchers.

*Brenda Sherrer, President Henderson County League of Women Voters*

### Use our tax dollars to fund public schools

**To the Editor:** Governor Cooper was right on when he said, "It's clear that the Republican legislature is aiming to choke the life out of public education..." But when he added, "This is an intentional slap in the face of teachers," Cooper didn't go far enough. It's not only a slap in the face to teachers but also to parents, students, and every single North Carolinian.

The budget bill passed by the NC Senate, which slashes taxes for the rich, and supported by WNC Senator Tim Moffitt, includes millions of dollars to pay for unaccountable private schools while providing public school teachers with a measly raise of \$250 over two years.

Along with public safety, there is no more important civic function than providing for the education of all of our residents. While historically some families have chosen to educate their children in private schools, the vast majority of us have depended on public schools as a first-rate education available to all.

Do you really want your tax dollars paying for private schools that can teach whatever they want with no oversight? Tell Moffitt his bill is an insult to all North Carolinians. Use our tax dollars to fund public schools.

*Rachel Poller, Hendersonville*