

My name is Elizabeth Foster - President of the Guilford County Association of Educators; a certified and highly qualified special education teacher.

I would like to speak with you for a moment about this legislature's impact on public education. Our current lawmakers have not upheld their constitutional responsibility to adequately fund public education. Period. They are burdening local cities and towns by transferring THEIR funding responsibility onto them. The situation we now face has increased class size by slashing teachers and teacher assistants, destroyed our once premier pre-kindergarten and teacher education programs, siphoned off vital TAXPAYER funding to voucher and charter schools with no fiscal oversight, eliminated professional development and instructional materials, and these legislators have further embarrassed the great state of North Carolina by paying teachers at the bottom of the nation.

These politicians have attempted to destroy a profession by insinuating poor performing teachers are to blame for everything wrong in education when nothing could be further from the truth. When politicians meddle in something they are not certified or qualified to make decisions on, the government has too big a hand in what should be a local decision. Merit pay is an example of a failed notion and is not an answer to school improvement and certainly not effective when you are not paying teachers a competitive salary, a salary that neither attracts or retains the best and brightest teachers to live and raise THEIR families in North Carolina.

Furthermore, teacher pay is so low not one of my friends is able to make ends meet; and need to work additional jobs AND all while they are desperately trying to keep up with the demands this legislature has placed on them from misaligned testing to misaligned "REFORM" policies that have failed elsewhere.

I believe the politicians have realized they have made BIG mistakes and are desperately back-peddling only because it is an election year by saying they are giving educators a raise or putting other "REFORMS" in place to fix the ones they just messed up on.

I am blessed to work for Guilford County where our school board has so far successfully challenged one of the many unconstitutional education "REFORMS" this legislature has forced onto our state. The time when North Carolinians "take it" is over. It is time to stand up and regain the respect of the nation. I challenge our legislators to do right by their constituents and what is best for our state. Now. Attacking public education is not how we grow our future or our economy. Thank you.