

Resolution in Support of Equitable Funding for Students with Disabilities in Buncombe County Schools

WHEREAS, the Buncombe County Board of Education is committed to providing every child, regardless of ability, with a quality education and fostering a culture where every student will thrive and learn from exceptional educators;

WHEREAS, federal law, specifically the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requires schools to provide children with qualifying disabilities a free and appropriate education, which includes special education and related services, as well as early intervention for toddlers and infants;

WHEREAS, the State of North Carolina provides funding for services for students with disabilities through several budget codes, the primary being PRC 0032 (Children with Disabilities);

WHEREAS, state funding under PRC 0032 is calculated at \$5,593.34 for each child participating in the district's Exceptional Children's program;

WHEREAS, unfortunately, the number of exceptional children that are funded under PRC 0032 is capped at the lesser of the district's December 1 exceptional children's headcount or 13% of the district's total Average Daily Membership (ADM);

WHEREAS, Buncombe County Schools has a total ADM of 21,467 students, with 2,816 identified as exceptional children, representing 13.12% of our student population, above the state's 13% funding cap;

WHEREAS, due to this cap, 25 Buncombe County students in grades Kindergarten through twelfth grade participating in the Exceptional Children's program are not funded by the state, resulting in a shortfall of \$138,833.50 in state Exceptional Children funding for the 2025–26 school year alone;

WHEREAS, regardless of the cap for PRC 0032, Buncombe County Schools far exceeds the per pupil allotment provided by the State of North Carolina for exceptional children.

WHEREAS, during the 2024-2025 school year, Buncombe County Schools allocated and spent \$12,513.34 for every student in the Exceptional Children's Program;

WHEREAS, the State of North Carolina only provided Buncombe County Schools a total allotment of \$8,132.53 per student in the Exceptional Children's Program, resulting in a shortfall of \$4,380.80 per student, or a total shortfall of \$13,278,235.11.

WHEREAS, the \$13,278,235.11 shortfall must be offset by using local funds provided by

Buncombe County;

WHEREAS, this unfunded gap places a disproportionate burden on local resources, limits the district's ability to provide essential services, and compromises our efforts to meet both state and federal requirements for exceptional children programming.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Buncombe County Board of Education:

1. **Formally urges the North Carolina General Assembly** to revise the funding formula to reflect actual enrollment and service needs of students with disabilities rather than an arbitrary percentage cap.
2. **Calls upon the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction** to provide supplemental funding or relief for districts like Buncombe County, which are required to serve all eligible students with disabilities regardless of the funding cap.
3. **Requests that state leaders acknowledge the financial impact of this cap**, particularly for growing districts with a higher-than-average population of students with disabilities and take urgent action to close this gap.
4. **Commits to advocating alongside other school districts, families, and stakeholders** for a fair, needs-based Exceptional Children funding model statewide.
5. **Pledges to continue supporting every student with a disability in Buncombe County Schools**, while seeking sustainable and equitable solutions that ensure compliance, support, and student success.

Approved and adopted by the Buncombe County Board of Education this ____ day of March, 2026.

Rob Elliot, Chair

Dr. Rob Jackson, Superintendent