

Our Public Schools Are Worth Fighting For



AAUW: EmpowerHer Tuesdays

October 28, 2025



Who We Are

➔ **Statewide Advocacy; Nonpartisan**

➔ **Fact Sheets & Reports**

➔ **Social Media**

➔ **Action Alerts & Petitions**

➔ **Webinars & Presentations**





Who We Are

Public Schools

are a

Public Good

School Funding Overview and Rankings

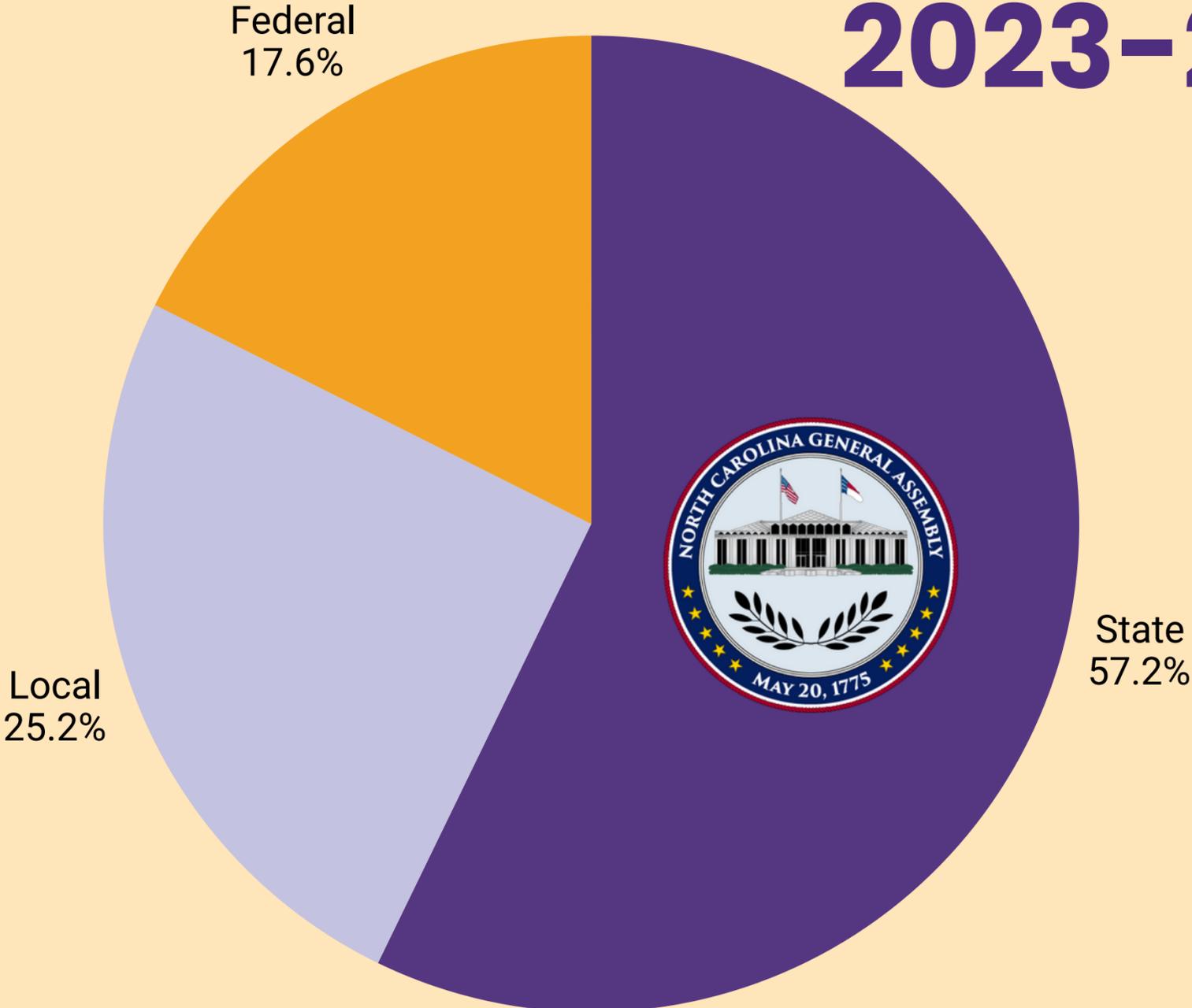


School Funding Overview



2023-24

Most funding for NC's public schools comes from the legislature (state dollars).



School Funding Overview



NC's Corporate Tax Rate

6.9% 2013

2.5% 2021

2.25% 2025

0%

by 2030



Rankings: Funding for *Public Schools*



**NC is 49th in the nation
for “funding effort”.**

“Funding Effort measures the amount of state and local tax revenue dedicated to K-12 public education relative to the state's overall economic output, or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This metric indicates a state's commitment to funding education; for example, a higher percentage of GDP spent on schools signifies a greater effort to support their students.”

“Making the Grade” report, Education Law Center
Dec. 2024

49

**Funding
Effort**

Rankings: Teacher Pay



43

NC ranking in average,
overall teacher pay

Dropped from 38th

39

NC ranking in average,
beginning teacher pay

Up from 42nd

NC Teacher Pipeline



Between 2012–2024,
enrollment in
educator bachelor's
programs dropped
45%

Our Public Schools Are Worth Fighting For...because



*Public Schools Get Results!
A look at school performance...*





Home

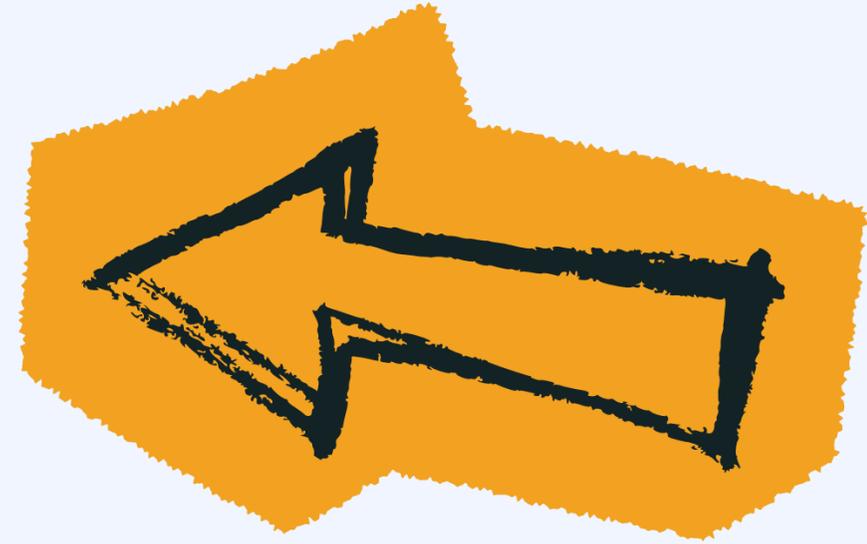
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

[Link to DPI Press Release](#)

[Link to NC Data \(NAEP\)](#)

Test scores, graduation rates on the rise for North Carolina students

North Carolina students achieved a three-year high in most standardized tests at the end of the 2024-25 academic year, according to the annually released test data that was presented to the State Board of Education today.



Public Schools Get Results: Achievement & Accountability



Source: NCDPI, Sept. 2025

87.7%

4 yr. cohort
graduation
rate

**up from 87.0%
a 10 yr. high!**

71%

NC public
schools met
or exceeded
growth

**Growth not fairly
represented in A-F
school grades**

35%

English learners
progressed
through &
exited English
Learner Status

**up from 27%
last year!**

ALL

End-of-grade
math tests had
highest levels*
of percentage
of students
achieving
grade-level
proficiency

***highest
levels in 3 yrs**

Public Schools Get Results: Achievement & Accountability



**SCHOOL LETTER GRADES
are used as a
privatization tool!
They unfairly stigmatize
students and teachers.**

- NC's 20% growth + 80% test score = **worst formula in the US** among states that use A-F school letter grades
- Multiple by-partisan calls for changing how schools are evaluated have failed
- A more balanced formula would be more fair to children, educators AND communities.

Public Schools Get Results: Achievement & Accountability



Source: NCDPI, Sept. 2025

The percentage of students proficient in reading and math reached their **highest level in three years** in 12 of 15 tests.

Only *Grade 3* reading, English II and NC Math 1 did not achieve their highest level.

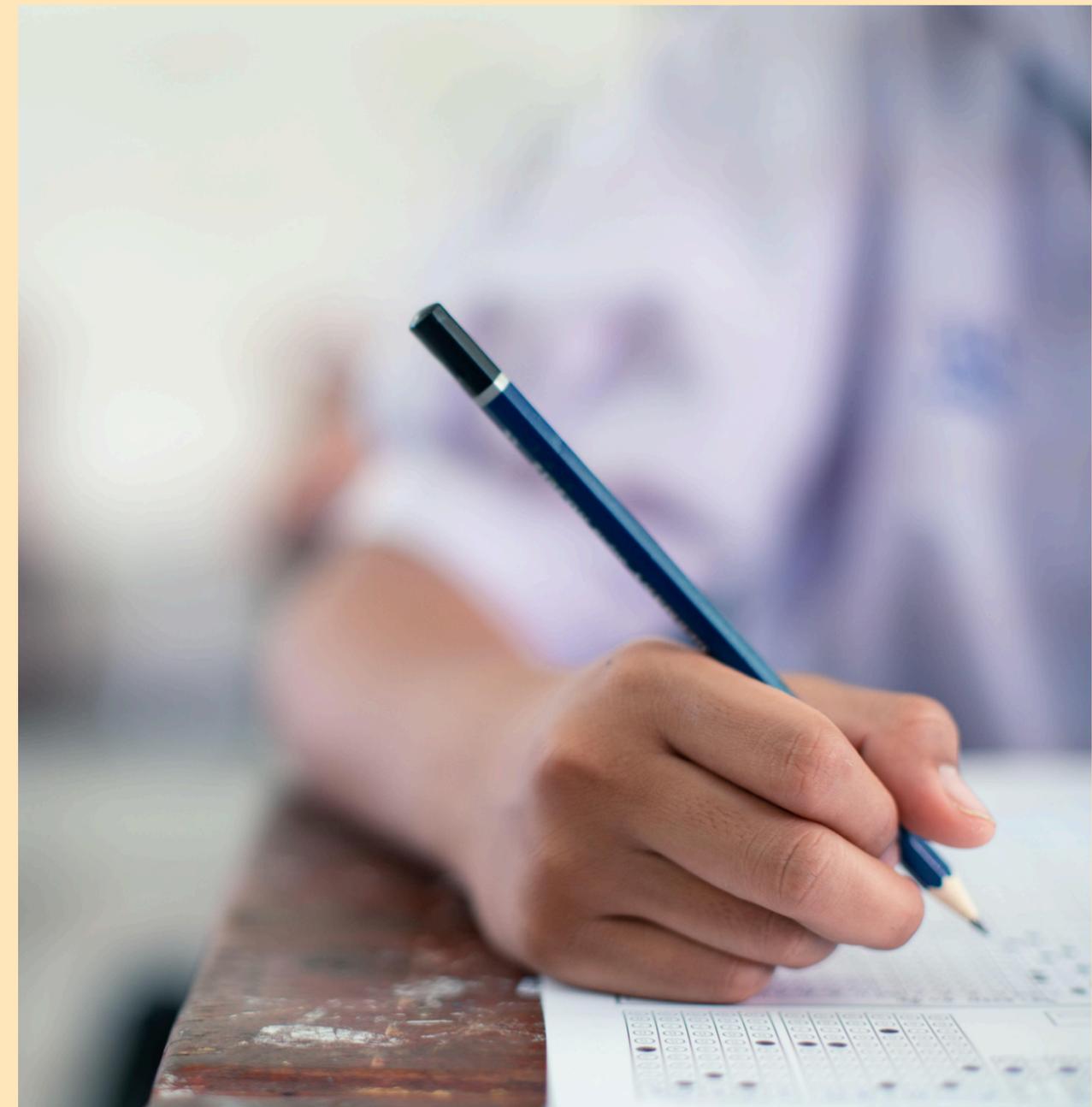
The combined results for all grades and subjects (composite score) for all race/ethnicity groups also **reached their highest level in three years.**

Public Schools Get Results: Achievement & Accountability



Source: NCDPI, Sept. 2025

The ACT composite score for 11th graders was up slightly from last year at 18.2 and *moving toward the state goal of 20 by 2030.*



Public Schools Get Results: Achievement & Accountability



More work is needed! = Accountability

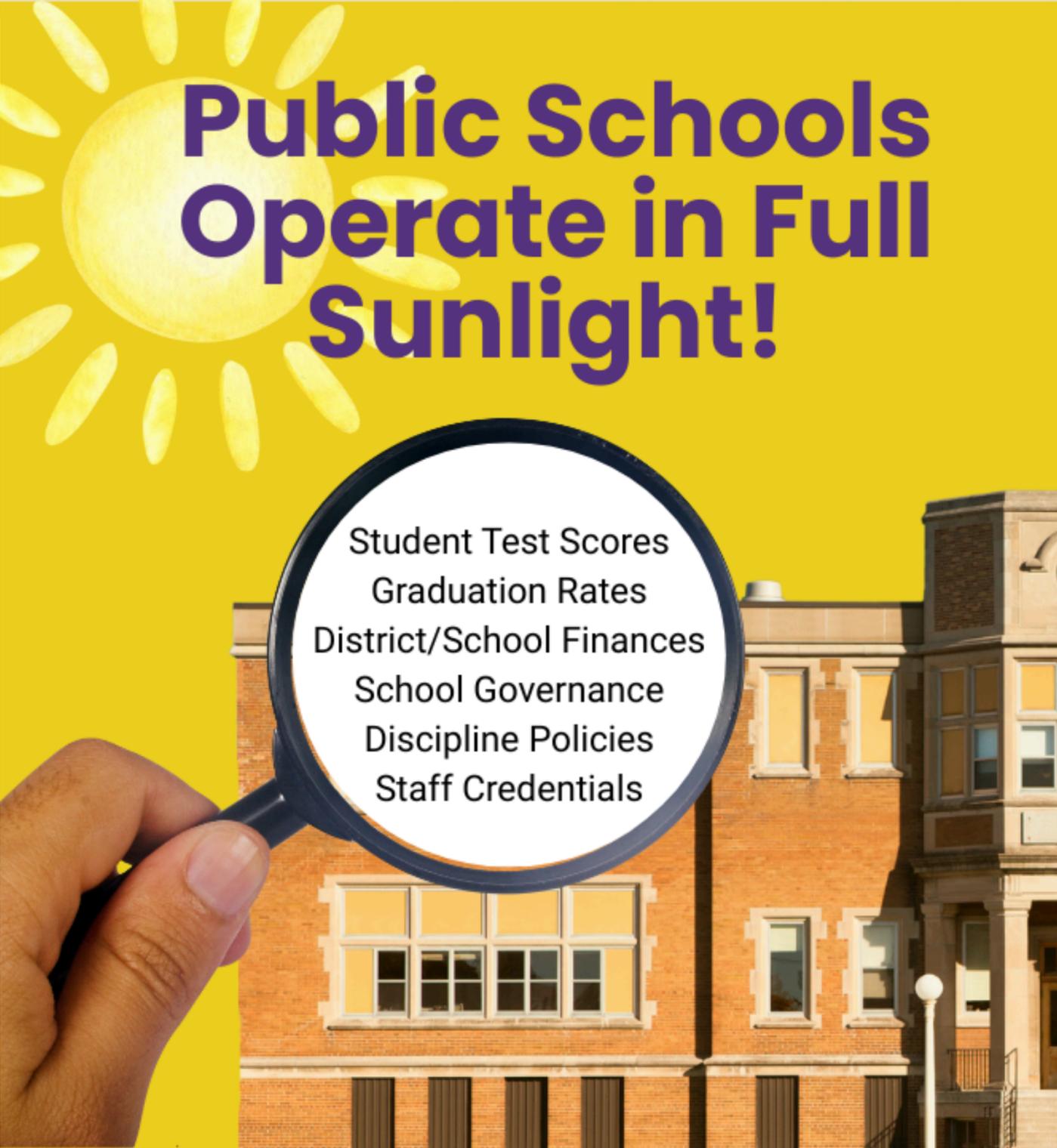
- Scores in most grades/subjects still fall short of pre-pandemic levels. Statewide, only grade 4 reading and math have exceeded pre-pandemic levels, though many others are close.
- Hurricane Helene added additional challenges for western counties that lost multiple weeks of school due to the devastation caused by Helene.



Public Schools Get Results: Achievement & Accountability



Public Schools Operate in Full Sunlight!

A hand holds a magnifying glass over a brick school building. The background is a bright yellow sun.

Student Test Scores
Graduation Rates
District/School Finances
School Governance
Discipline Policies
Staff Credentials

Private Schools Operate in the Dark

A hand holds a magnifying glass over a hand holding a stack of US dollar bills. The background is a dark, starry night sky with question marks.

Information not
available to the public.

WHY?



NC's Private School Vouchers

NC Voucher Schools: NO Accountability!



REQUIREMENTS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL VOUCHER PROGRAMS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS

	AZ	CLE	D.C.	IN	LA	ME	MD	MIL	OH	VT	WI	NC
Accreditation or State Approval		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Regulated Curriculum	✓ ₁	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Certified Teachers		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
State Testing Program		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ₂		✓	✓ ₃	✓	✓	
Regulated hours/days of school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

- 1 Any student with a voucher must be educated in reading, grammar, math, social studies, and science.
- 2 If 60% of students are publicly funded, school must participate in the state testing program.
- 3 For all high schools and for any school in which 65% of students are getting vouchers.

***NC's
voucher
program is
the most
unregulated
in the U.S.***

NC Voucher Schools: NO Accountability!



NC private schools that receive state-funded tuition payments are required to administer tests to students in grades 3 and above. ***However, each school is allowed to select its preferred test and the results are not made public.***

NC Voucher Schools: NO Accountability!

**NO curriculum
standards for NC private
voucher schools.**

What kind of education
are NC taxpayers paying
for through the voucher
program?

[Link to Report](#)



**NC K-12 PRIVATE SCHOOLS
2024-2025:
A REVIEW OF CURRICULUM**

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST NC
June 2025**



Public Schools Educate *ALL* Children:



**NC SCHOOL VOUCHERS:
USING TAX DOLLARS TO
DISCRIMINATE AGAINST
STUDENTS & FAMILIES**

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST NC
July 2025**

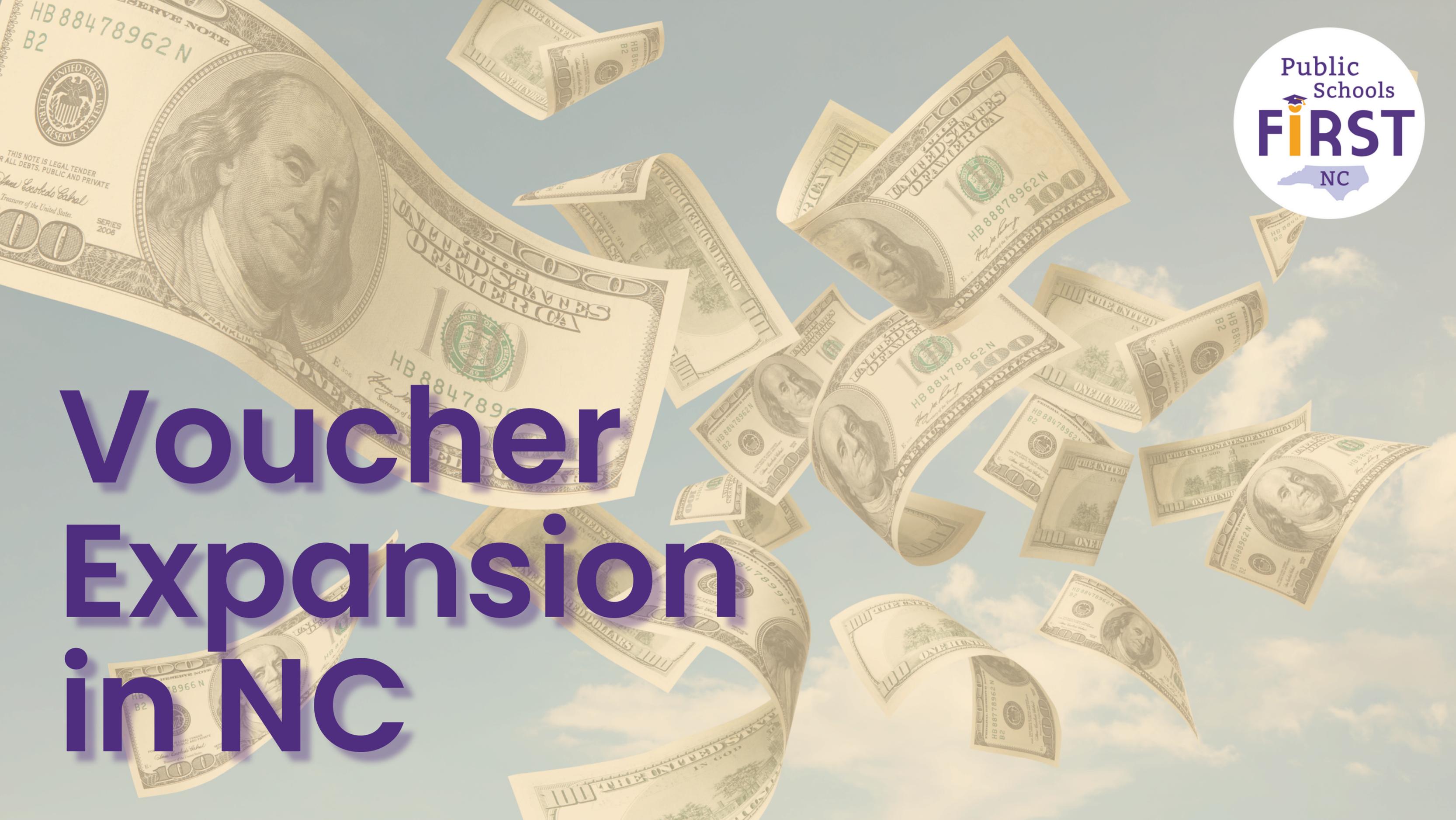


**Voucher Schools are
allowed to discriminate!**

**Updated!
July 2025**

**Voucher
Discrimination Report**

[Link to Report](#)



Voucher Expansion in NC

Voucher Expansion: Policy



Prior Enrollment in a Public School

2014-2022 required for grades 2-12

2022-2024 required for grades 3-12

2024-2025 *no longer required!*

Why this matters:

When the program started, this requirement prevented most students already enrolled in private school from accessing a voucher.

Voucher Expansion: Policy

Eligibility expanded since voucher introduction in 2014-15

Starting with the 2024-25 school year, ALL families are now eligible for vouchers

Tier	Family Income as Percent F/RL Eligibility	Annual Family Income by Percent F/RL Eligibility (2024-25) Family of 4	Voucher as % of Average Annual Per Pupil Allocation (SY 2024-25)
1	Up to 100%	Up to \$57,720	100% (\$7,468)
2	100% - 200%	\$57,720 to \$115,440	90% (\$6,722)
3*	200% - 450%	\$115,440 to \$259,740	60% (\$4,480)
4*	450% and Above	\$259,740 and Above	45% (\$3,360)

*Tiers 3 & 4 are NEWLY ELIGIBLE for vouchers.



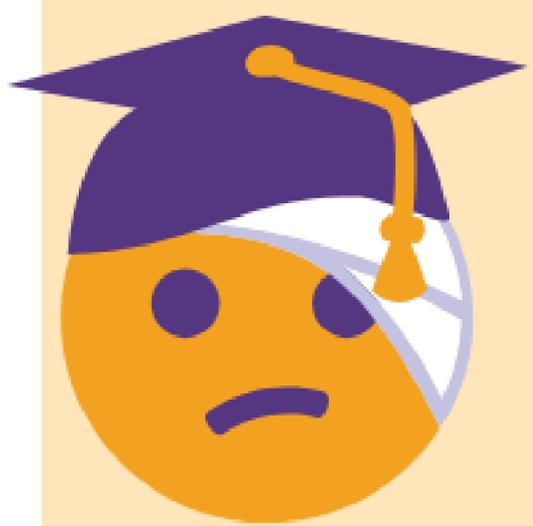
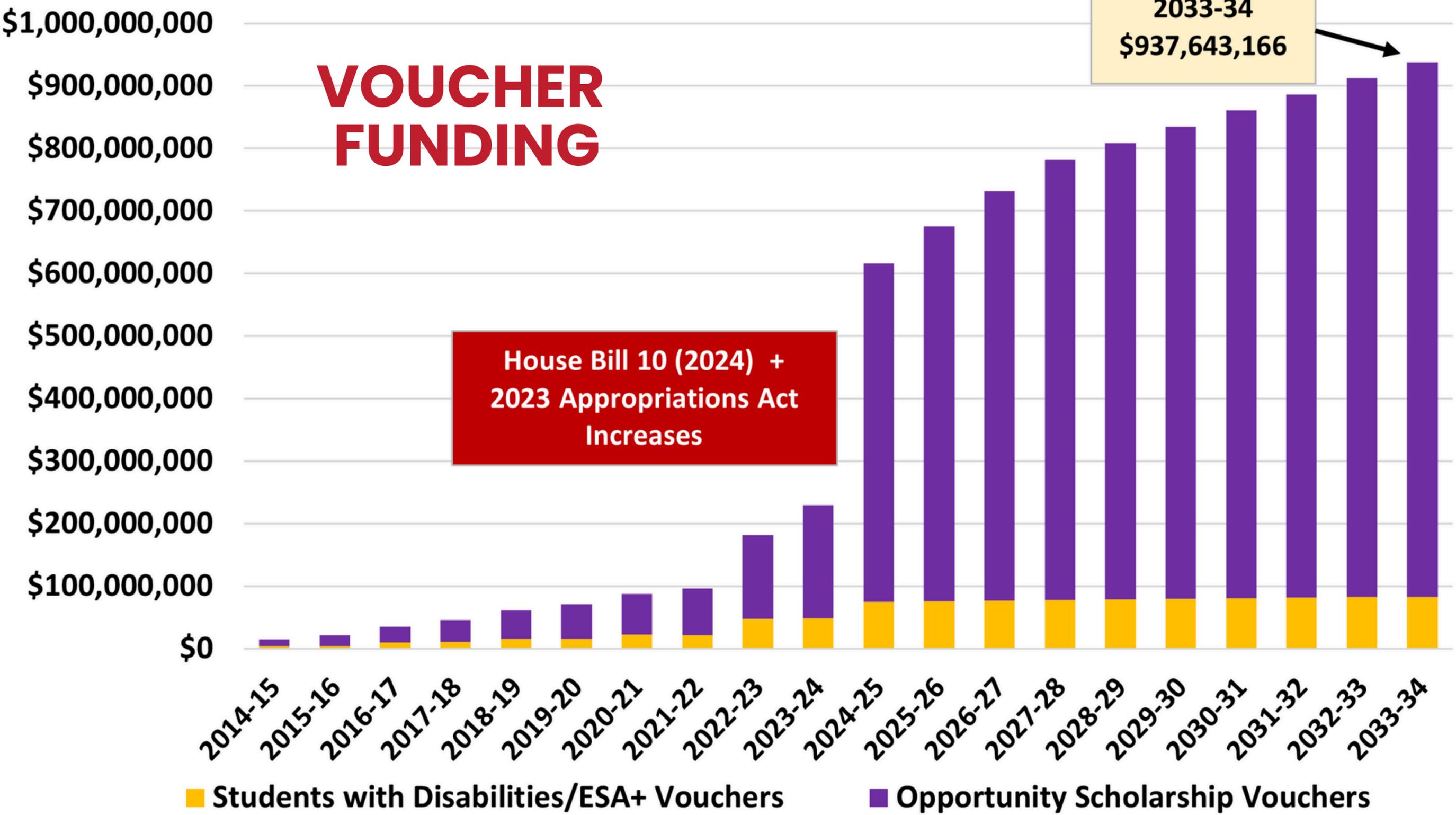
Opportunity Scholarship and ESA+ Voucher Program Appropriations for Use in Each School Year



VOUCHER FUNDING

House Bill 10 (2024) + 2023 Appropriations Act Increases

**2033-34
\$937,643,166**



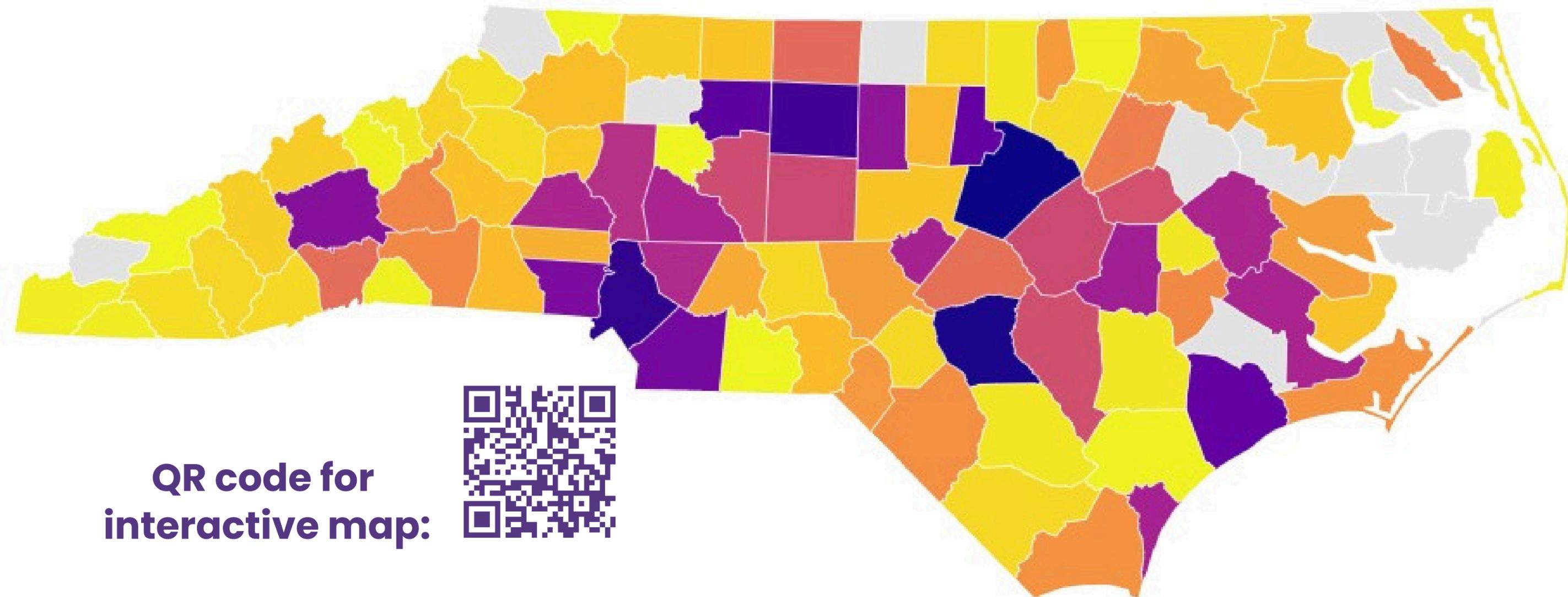
VOUCHERS Hurt

Data Source: NCGA

Total dollars spent on private school tuition vouchers 2014-15 through 2024-25, by county

Dollar amounts represent funds sent to private schools within each county. Grey counties have zero voucher-accepting private schools.

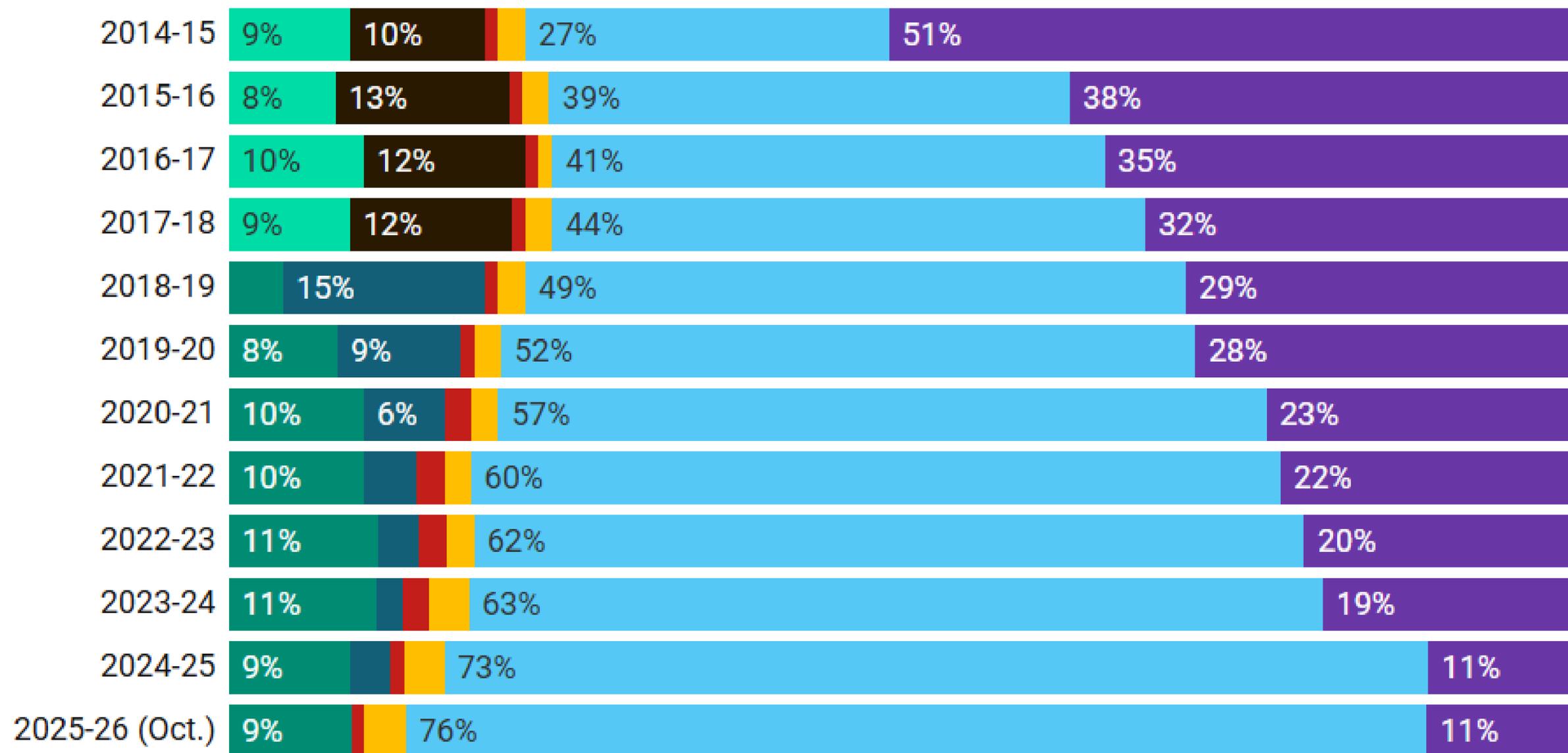
Voucher funds per county



Percentage of Opportunity Scholarship Voucher Recipients by Race

Percentage of voucher recipients by race from 2014-15 through 2025-26 (October).

■ Hispanic
 ■ Two or More Races
 ■ Choose Not to Answer
 ■ Other
 ■ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 ■ American Indian or Alaska Native
 ■ Asian
 ■ White
 ■ Black or African American



Private School Vouchers



Lost lawsuit was devastating!

- In Dec. 2013 a lawsuit filed against the voucher program.
- In 2014 a Superior Court Judge found the vouchers unconstitutional.

The NCGA appealed, and in July 2015 the NC Supreme Court overruled the Superior Court. They ruled vouchers do not violate the NC Constitution. This ruling led us to where we are today: diverting hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars per year to private school vouchers.

NEW Federal Vouchers



New, Federal Voucher Program:

Established under the July 5, 2025 budget bill H.R. 1 ("Big Beautiful Bill"), the federal school voucher program is the first of its kind.

Participation requires state approval. The NCGA moved swiftly to pass an **opt-in bill: HB 87**.

However, Governor Stein vetoed the legislation citing the lack of federal guidance.





Advocacy for Public Education



Advocacy: We Need YOU!



- *Share our content!
- *Write Op-Eds, LTEs
- *Alert your friends
- *Reach out to professional colleagues; contacts in education

Use Social Media



Wake County

Wake County private schools received **316% more** in taxpayer funded vouchers in the year after the income cap was lifted.

\$9.8 M in 2023
\$13.5 M in 2024
\$56.1 M in 2025!



Since the voucher program started in 2014, private schools in Wake County have received **\$105,794,785!**

Data Source:
NCSEAA
April 2025

**COUNTY
PROFILE IMAGES
ON VOUCHERS**

Formatted for Instagram*, these county-specific profiles can be found at **publicschoolsfirstnc.org** and on our social media.

**Can be used on other platforms!*

Use Social Media

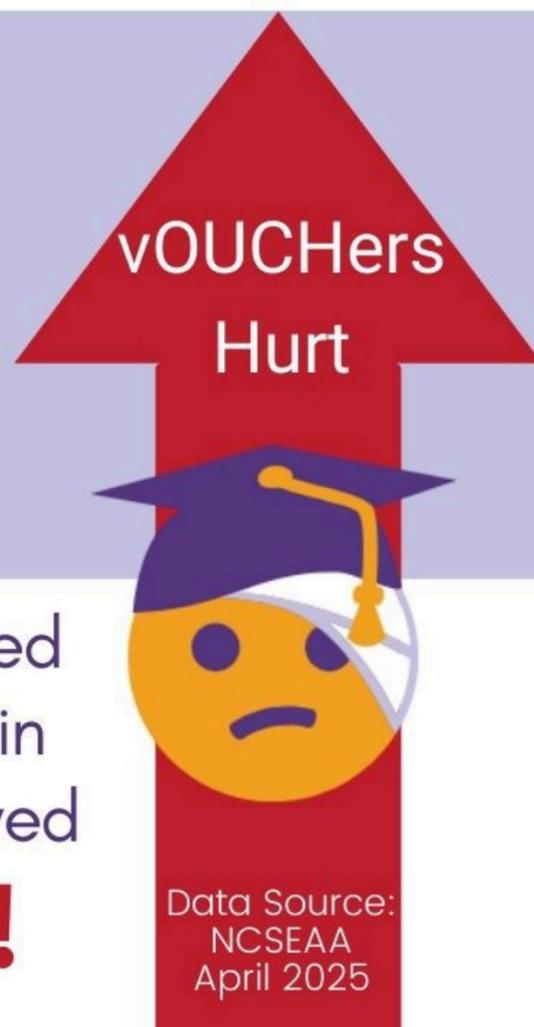


Chatham County



Chatham County private schools received **520.5% more** in taxpayer funded vouchers in the year after the income cap was lifted.

\$212.6 K in 2023
\$267.6 K in 2024
\$1.7 M in 2025!



Since the voucher program started in 2014, private schools in Chatham County have received **\$2,479,183!**

Data Source:
NCSEAA
April 2025

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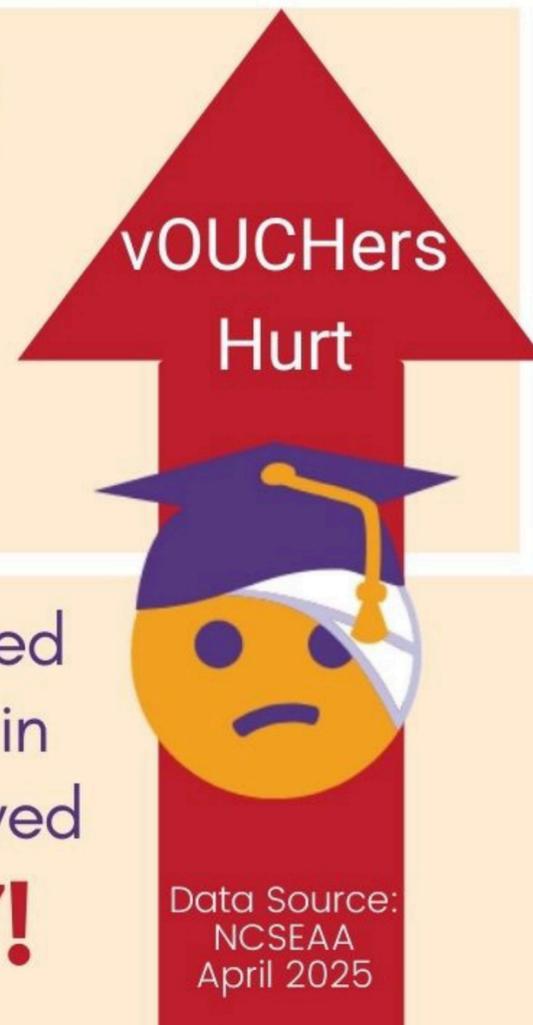
Use Social Media



Orange County

Orange County private schools received **106% more** in taxpayer funded vouchers in the year after the income cap was lifted.

\$934.2 K in 2023
\$1.3 M in 2024
\$2.6 M in 2025!



Since the voucher program started in 2014, private schools in Orange County have received **\$6,265,767!**

Data Source:
NCSEAA
April 2025

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**Can be used on other platforms!*

Use Social Media



FOLLOW, LIKE & SHARE!

- Find your School District (not just your school!) on social media & share their content
- Links to reports & fact sheets
- Resources from partner orgs
- Links to webinars
- Action Alerts (contact lawmakers, petitions, etc.)



Advocacy: We Need YOU!



Not on Social Media?

Subscribe & share our newsletters, fact sheets, reports, webinars. Host a free Zoom presentation.

Attend School Board Meetings



- **Be informed**
- **Provide public comment**
- **Support educators**
- **Influence policy decisions**
- **Support local school funding**
- **Hold school board members accountable**



Heal Together NC:
Honest Education & Action
Leadership

Know Your County Commissioners



**County Commissioners
provide local school funding.**

They are statutorily required to provide capital funding but they can also fill state funding gaps such as teacher pay supplements.



Advocacy: Take Action!



Coming 2026!

wEDnesdays
for
Public Schools



Join us outside the NCGA the 2nd **wED**nesdays of the month:
January–April to support public education in NC.

Be A Pro-Public Education Voter



- **Inform parents of upcoming elections: key dates, offices**
- **Promote Voter Registration**
- **Encourage parents to look up their *sample ballots* & be informed on issues re public schools (NCVoter.org)**
- **VOTE in ALL elections!**



Connect with us!

PublicSchoolsFirstNC.org



Public Schools First NC



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