



April 7, 2020

Hon. Tim Moore, Speaker  
Hon. Members of the Education Working Group of the House Select Committee on COVID-19  
Hon. Members of the North Carolina General Assembly from Wake County  
Legislative Building  
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Members:

The WakeEd Partnership Board of Directors supports the Wake County Public School System and other elected and appointed officials in their coordinated effort to keep the staff and students safe from the COVID-19 pandemic while also working swiftly and creatively to support students academically and nutritionally.

As this unprecedented situation continues to develop, our public schools will need support and flexibility from the state and federal governments to reassure employees about their livelihood and so schools can move nimbly through uncertainty.

Therefore, the Board of Directors is endorsing and encouraging the following actions:

1. Continue without interruption or delay the salary, benefits, and extra-duty pay for all WCPSS employees (including substitutes who were in service as of March 13, 2020 through the end of their previously approved service period).
2. Provide operational flexibility to meet local needs now known or which have yet to be defined or realized, such as, but not limited to, start and end dates of school, number of school days or hours, and freedom to repurpose allotment funds to address the most critical needs.
3. Continue these and any other measures legislators and policy makers approve until schools resume normal operations.

WakeEd's Board of Directors is composed of more than 30 business and community leaders who represent Wake County's largest employers, taxpayers, and essential services. We believe these measures are crucial to supporting the local economy.

WCPSS is Wake County's third largest employer, and a major driver of spending in local businesses. As revealed in the joint-WakeEd and WCPSS study on the impact of the local school system, prepared by Dr. Michael Walden at N.C. State University, for every \$1 spent on WCPSS operations, \$1.76 is returned to the local economy.

Our region can't afford to lose that kind of economic support at this time. Any public school employee who is laid off will be forced into the already overwhelmed unemployment system and will lose critical medical benefits when they need them most. The money to pay these employees was already part of the FY20 budget and planned as part of the FY21 budget.



INVESTING IN EDUCATION

In addition, local school boards and their superintendents need flexibility to respond to the evolving needs of this crisis in real time. Working within guidance from state education authorities, local education agencies such as Wake County Public Schools need to be able to make decisions regarding instructional time, school days, assessment and grading, professional development, learning resources, technology deployment, and special education and ESL services, among others, all of which have tight restrictions under current statutes. Loosening regulations until normal operations resume is prudent.

We encourage legislators and policy makers to move swiftly to make these changes to reduce the harm to our state and local economies and to limit the loss of instruction and support for students and families.

Sincerely,

*Caroline McCullen*

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Interim President

And

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CC: Cathy Moore, WCPSS Superintendent

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