

# NCCA Lobbyist Report

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Since finishing the majority of their work this summer, legislators have returned to Raleigh several times for quick monthly sessions authorized by the July adjournment resolution. While veto overrides have been a big part of these sessions, the legislature also passed a mini-budget in early September.

## **Mini-Budget**

Unable to come to an agreement on a budget bill during the 2024 short session, legislators approved a mini-budget that included a handful of narrow topics that the House and Senate were able to agree on. House Bill 10 highlights include:

- \$463 million in state funding to provide private school vouchers to 55,000 students on the Opportunity Scholarship voucher waitlist. The law allows the funds to be used retroactively to reimburse parents for private school tuition in the current school years and allows families to receive vouchers regardless of household income.
- Allocation of an additional \$277 million in recurring funding and \$100 million in nonrecurring funding to cover Medicaid rebase in the current fiscal year.
- Allocation of \$95 million to the Department of Public Instruction to fund enrollment growth in public schools.
- Allocation of \$64 million to the Community College System for enrollment growth.
- Allocation of \$23 million to the State Education Assistance Authority for the Children with Disabilities Program.
- Requirement for all North Carolina Sheriffs to cooperate with federal detainer warrants from US immigration officials.

On September 20, joined by education and business leaders, Governor Cooper vetoed HB10. During the press conference, the governor emphasized the need for investments in public education, and criticized the funneling of hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars toward vouchers for private schools.

## **Next Mini-Session**

Pursuant to the adjournment resolution, the legislature is authorized to return the week of October 9. While it was previously assumed that veto override votes on House Bill 10 would take center stage, the recovery from Hurricane Helene will now take that spot. Legislators are expected to start debating the various responses needed to the emergency, including funding, changes in school calendar rules for the schools in WNC, and, potentially, changes to election rules. According to state elections director, Karen Brinson Bell, the state elections board is

working on finalizing a list of requests to the legislature for changes to state election laws that would address issues such as planned early voting sites that may no longer be usable in the two dozen storm-affected counties, early voting in those counties, and whether online voting could be available to individuals in areas where roads remain closed.