



## Vote to End Poverty = Vote for Academic Success

By Christine Kushner, former member, Wake County Board of Education

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“There need be no poor among you.” Deuteronomy 15

**Poverty is the fourth leading cause of death in America**—that alone should shock and sadden us as a nation. The further injury is that poverty is **highest among children**, our most vulnerable. It has long been known that children living in poverty are more likely to struggle in school.

That should surprise no one—children with more resources have more success in school—but it remains a stubborn conundrum for state policy makers. Poverty is a policy choice—our community has the means to lift up children living in poverty, yet our legislative leaders continue to short-change children by underfunding policies that can actually lift families out of poverty along with improving school achievement

Specifically, here in North Carolina, we continue to underfund public education, where the majority of children are educated. We as a community and state can change that—the possibility was made clear at an energizing rally in early March, led by Bishop William Barber, Professor in the Practice of Public Theology and Public Policy at the Yale Divinity School and a native of North Carolina. Bishop Barber, a long-time advocate for public education, made the case that poverty is a policy choice—one we can change.

At the Poor People’s Campaign rally in front of the NC Legislative Building on March 2, Bishop Barber called for a moral revival, a movement to end poverty and to mobilize poor and low-wage workers to have an impact on our policy choices. **Poor people and low wage workers make up 41 percent of eligible voters in North Carolina**, and if these voters are mobilized, we could change the priorities away from corporate greed and benefits for the wealthy and toward ending poverty.

**In 2022, almost 22 percent of NC children under the age of 18 lived in poverty**, according to the State Office of Budget and Management; among NC children under the age of 6, that rate was 24.2 percent; among people over the age of 65, the poverty rate was just 10.78 percent. So among our most vulnerable people, the aged are being cared for, but our children are not.

I am not advocating against caring for older vulnerable people; **I am advocating for taking further steps to help our children.**

We must **fully fund our public schools in North Carolina**—there is a clear nonpartisan plan, the [Comprehensive Remedial Plan](#), that lays out the way to do that. Instead, the NCGA is expanding the privatization of education, giving wealthy parents vouchers—taxpayer dollars—to send their children to private schools. We are cutting taxes for the wealthy and for corporations. We are not making moral choices in policy that could better care for vulnerable children and end poverty.

That again should sadden and shock us as a state, and as a community. We must choose to invest in our children and their present and future well-being.

During the pandemic, the federal government increased financial assistance to families with children, and the poverty rates among children fell. Now that that assistance has ended, child poverty is again increasing. Again, it shows that poverty is a policy choice.

As a community, we can lift up children out of poverty. That will help them do better in school. Instead, the NCGA is impoverishing our public schools.

Investing in public schools will help rural North Carolina. Investing in child care will create better early childhood education jobs and improve outcomes for children. Data shows that these are great investments for our public dollars.

Let's truly invest in our youth by making those policy choices—invest in family welfare, lift families and children out of poverty, and invest in public education. It is time for North Carolinians to live up to our obligations to our children.

Voters who care about ending poverty must be mobilized for the November election to seek out candidates who support their values. Voting is the best way to change policy. We should all work toward that goal—to maximize voter participation, especially among low wage workers and the poor.

Onward to November!

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