

Governor's Opposition to Family School Choice Draws Major Backlash

North Carolina Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper launched a campaign Monday to try to block proposed school choice legislation by the Republican-controlled General Assembly.

In his video address released Monday, Cooper said he's "declaring this a state of emergency" for public education but pointed out it was not an official order. He called on residents to encourage their legislators to reject GOP-backed education bills in the final weeks of the chief work period for this year's legislative session.

North Carolina's Senate Bill 406 titled *Choose Your School, Choose Your Future* would do away with any family income requirements for all students who apply for the state's K-12 private school scholarship program. Under the proposed legislation, the scholarship would pay up to 45% of tuition at a school the student chooses.

That expansion ultimately would send over \$500 million in taxpayer money annually to the Opportunity Scholarship Program. In contrast, the governor said, the Senate budget would raise base salaries for some veteran teachers by just \$250 over two years.

Republicans point out that public education spending would grow by several hundred million dollars a year annually in their competing plans. And GOP leaders consider expansion of the private-school vouchers program part of a philosophy to give all children access to education options—whatever the source—to help them succeed.

"It's clear that the Republican legislature is aiming to choke

the life out of public education,” the governor claimed. He urged voters to “take immediate action and tell them to stop the damage that will set back our schools for a generation.”

Cooper then bashed the idea of giving a choice to parents, calling it a “scheme.”

“Their private school voucher scheme will pour your tax money into private schools that are unaccountable to the public and can decide which students they want to keep out. They want to expand private school vouchers so that anyone, even a millionaire, can get taxpayer money for their children’s private academy tuition,” he said.

The governor said public school teacher pay proposals by Republicans fall way short and will fail to address a statewide teacher shortage.

Cooper also claimed that when students “leave public schools for private schools, the public schools lose hundreds of millions of dollars.”

The governor is expected to veto the school choice bill. State law requires a vote of 60% of the legislature to override his veto. However, Cooper’s last two vetoes have been overridden by Republican lawmakers in the past two weeks, because they hold a supermajority of exactly three-fifths in each chamber, 72-48 in the House and 30-20 in the Senate.

Several media outlets have reported that all 102 Republican lawmakers have already shown their support for SB 406.

The governor’s state of emergency announcement also drew backlash on social media.

For the rest of this article, visit our content partners at CBN News. {eo}

Reprinted with permission from . Copyright © 2023 The Christian Broadcasting Network Inc. All rights reserved.