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July 22, 2013

Dear North Carolina General Assembly Members,

I am writing today to inform you that support of the current budget agreement will mean that this General Assembly has chosen to abandon our public school system and to further place a target on the back of the hard working men and women that are entrusted with the care and education of our children.

The elimination of class size caps, the firing of thousands of teacher assistants, investment in a private school voucher scheme that will only enrich those who seek to profit off of public schools, and the devaluing of education as a career will position our state as a model in what not to do in education.

For generations the compact for North Carolina educators was that in exchange for modest salaries, the state would ensure due process protections from arbitrary dismissal as well as excellent benefits. Now, with this budget, we shatter the compact with teachers in an attempt to silence educators who wish to speak out on critical issues affecting the classroom and the students we serve.

Today, we are behind South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Virginia in per pupil funding. We are behind our neighbors in salaries and have dropped from 26th in the nation in teacher pay to 46th in five short years. This budget will ensure that we will rank at the very bottom in our commitment to public education and professional educators.

This is not the North Carolina that we have come to know and love. For a generation our state has been known as a leader in public education with forward thinking leadership that helped us to lead the nation in National Board Certified teachers, become a national model for high standards of accountability, a strong commitment to class sizes that are manageable so that teachers can teach, and the reduction of high school drop outs.

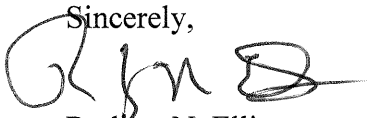
Today, you are placing a sign on each school's door that says, "quality educators need not apply."

The North Carolina Association of Educators will immediately pursue legal challenges on all of the following issues:

1. The constitutionality of taxpayer dollars to be used for private and for-profit schools.
2. Taking away employment rights already granted to veteran, proven educators.
3. The retrenchment from the state's plan to live up to its constitutional obligation in Leandro to provide a quality teacher in every classroom.

What is painfully clear is that the North Carolina General Assembly is not a venue for educators to find leadership. While it pains us to see the devaluation of education by our elected officials, we will now shift our focus on the judiciary where we are confident that we will find yet another victory in our struggle to provide quality public schools for every child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodney N. Ellis", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rodney N. Ellis
NCAE President