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Statement from the Superintendent of Carteret County Public Schools

Regarding the School Calendar Litigation

April 10, 2024

The Constitution of the State of North Carolina requires our state to provide equal educational opportunities for all students. Our laws also require traditional school boards to provide a sound basic education to enable our students to compete on an equal basis for gainful employment and admission to colleges and universities. The “school calendar law” applies only to traditional public schools. Charter schools, cooperative innovative high schools, and private schools receiving state voucher money, are not subject to the school calendar law. This in and of itself means that students in traditional public schools are not being treated equally.

The Carteret County Board of Education adopted the 2024-2025 school calendar with two purposes in mind. The first is to align our calendars with those of the community college. Many of our students are enrolled both in high school and in community college under a state program known as “dual enrollment.” This dual enrollment experience provides opportunities for high school students to obtain college credits, trade certifications and opportunities that expose them to valuable career opportunities. This program is also free of charge, saving students and families thousands of dollars. Additionally, when our school calendar is not aligned with the community college calendar, our dually enrolled students and their families are exposed to unnecessary hardships as they must navigate two different calendars with different start dates, end dates, and breaks.

The second purpose of adopting the 2024-2025 calendar is to properly balance the instructional calendar and allow students to take exams prior to Winter break. The calendar law, and its late August start date, pushes the end of the first semester to mid-January. This means students are taking exams after Winter break. This limits opportunities for students to take second semester college courses since the public school and community college calendars do not currently align. If we choose for students to take exams prior to Winter break with a late August semester start date, students are receiving significantly fewer instructional days in the fall semester, which negatively impacts student achievement. The current calendar law only affords us these two choices. Neither of these choices, we believe, is what is best for students in their pursuit of academic excellence.

We deeply regret that three businesses and some of their family members have challenged our 2024-2025 calendar in court. We do know our calendar has significant support among businesses and families in our county. We also know that strong academic performance of our schools creates one of the best environments for business and industry in our county. We have full confidence the academic benefits of shifting just nine student days (fourteen calendar days) for an earlier start in August produce no adverse impact on business and community.

Our 2024-2025 school calendar is designed to promote the best interests of students, and students alone. Our traditional public school students deserve the equal opportunities afforded students in non-traditional schools

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that are funded with tax dollars. The exemptions from the school calendar law for non-traditional schools have so skewed the playing field, the school calendar law has become a vehicle for unequal opportunity for our students, and it must yield in the face of the State constitution. We will strongly defend our 2024-2025 calendar in court.