PUBLIC SCHOOL FORUM of north carolina

2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Information
James (Jim) Harris
Running for NC House 16

Candidate Responses
Q1: *In your view, what is the purpose and value of public education for North Carolina?*

A1: Providing a free, sound, basic, (and enabling) education for ALL is not just a commitment within our State Constitution, it is the foundation for a free, informed and equal society, leading to the opportunity to improve one's standard of living and quality of life, regardless of income, family status, and physical or mental preconditions.

Q2: *Do you believe that the state is adequately funding our public schools? What changes, if any, would you propose related to funding for education in order to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a sound basic education?*

A2: No, not even close to it. I would work to reinstate the Leandro objectives that were rejected by our current GA and courts, through specific legislation designed to measure and improve equitable (e.g., cost/pupil) funding among all school districts in NC. Further, I would work to enact an NC-State funded bond issue for school construction, which has not occurred in recent history. NC's recent budget has helped, but falls far short, and proposed tax reductions will likely hamper equal or increased funding.

Q3: *As a member of the North Carolina General Assembly, what policies would you champion in order to ensure that all students have access to a qualified, diverse, dedicated educator workforce?*

A3: I would improve existing (not new) and ongoing educator pay rates to achieve pay equalization equal to 50-75% of the national norm. I would also work toward a public-private partnership to address housing affordability in high-cost districts as well as daycare facility cost-sharing by families, employers and the State.

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Q4: *Do you support the recent expansion of North Carolina's Opportunity Scholarship voucher program? What accountability measures should private schools receiving public tax dollars be held to?*

A4: No. Private education providers should be held to the exact same standards as public institutions, including limits on administrative expense ratios, salaries, and teacher qualifications. They should also be held to the same measurement and accountability reporting standards. The ACA (Obamacare) established "medical loss ratios" (general and administrative cost overhead limits) for managed healthcare providers and insurance companies - the same concept should apply to our educational institutions.

Q5: *What do you think the General Assembly should do to ensure schools are equipped to address student well-being and mental health needs?*

A5: Everyone is entitled to public safety in our public schools. Mental health care funding/staffing shortfalls are a huge part of the problem, and too easily sacrificed for "cost efficiency". These resources are not wasteful; they are essential and should be fully supported. I would ask the parents and the local community to establish cost-effective solutions to address these issues and requirements, with equitable State support.
