

Republicans Blast Governor Cooper's Opposition To Opportunity Scholarship

By Administrator

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Governor Roy Cooper, during an event put together by the liberal Public School Forum, said the Opportunity Scholarship program designed to help low- and middle-income families send their children to schools that better fit their individual needs is “wrong” and “needs to stop.” The Opportunity Scholarship program was created in 2013 by the General Assembly, and provides families with up to \$4,200 to attend a private school of their choice. In September, the General Assembly changed the income eligibility threshold to 150% of the amount required for a student to qualify for free or reduced lunch. That means a family of four making \$72,000 now qualifies for the Opportunity Scholarship.

“School vouchers are wrong. They hurt public schools. They hurt students,” Gov. Cooper said. “It is a wrong use of tax dollars and it needs to stop.”

A Civitas Institute Poll from January 2020 found that the Opportunity Scholarship had broad support among Republicans, Democrats, and unaffiliated voters.

Sen. Deanna Ballard (R-Watauga) said, “Gov. Cooper is just plain wrong about Opportunity Scholarships and school choice. When I hear from Opportunity Scholarship families, I listen to stories of children succeeding beyond their parents' expectations. I listen to their stories of growth and opportunity. The future of our students is not an expense, but a wise investment that empowers families and benefits the health and landscape of our state.”

Sen. Jim Perry (R-Lenoir) said, “How can giving disadvantaged students a chance to access schools previously reserved for the wealthy and elite be considered 'wrong' and hurtful? Gov. Cooper's logic just doesn't add up. A student's ZIP code shouldn't predetermine their future. Parents and students deserve to have the ability to choose a school that fits their needs. Opportunity Scholarships do just that.”

For the 2020–21 school year, at least 11,259 children are set to receive Opportunity Scholarship funding. The program serves more Black students than traditional public schools do.

The number of low- and middle-income children receiving Opportunity Scholarships has increased 926% since 2014