

# North Carolina teachers launch independent call-out amid budget deadlock: Unions move to derail the protest

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An anonymous call for a statewide “teacher call-out” circulated across North Carolina social media groups in late October, urging educators to take November 7 and 10 as days of protest against stagnant pay, rising insurance costs and the legislature’s failure to pass a state budget.

The call has resonated deeply with teachers who have watched their real incomes shrink for years. Nearly 3,000 educators responded to a survey launched by Jennilee Lloyd, a third-grade teacher in Wake County, showing widespread support for coordinated absences.

Since July 1, the Republican-controlled General Assembly has failed to pass the 2025–26 budget, leaving school employees under last year’s pay scale while the State Health Plan raises premiums.

Speaking to local news outlets, Lloyd said, “We’re very, very tired. We’re not getting raises, and in addition to that, we’re paying additional money in our insurance premiums. Most of us are taking a pay cut.”

The crisis in North Carolina’s schools reflects a broader national assault on public education under the Trump administration, which has cut federal funding while diverting billions toward vouchers and charter programs. Combined with the state’s budget deadlock, these policies have deepened the underfunding of public schools, forcing educators to bear the cost of austerity.

Average teacher pay in North Carolina now ranks 47th nationally, according to the National Education Association. A new teacher earns about \$41,000 a year, while those with 25 years of service make little more than \$60,000. Many long-serving teachers have gone more than two years without a raise.

The State Health Plan has effectively turned stagnant

wages into pay cuts by increasing premiums for most employees. In Wake County, monthly employee-only coverage will rise from \$40 to as high as \$94, on top of higher deductibles and prescription costs. The district’s benefits director warned that without new raises, most teachers will see a net loss in take-home pay.

On Friday, November 7, schools across the state reported elevated absences. Wake County, the largest district, said several schools experienced “higher-than-normal” call-outs, though overall disruption was limited. Other districts declined to release figures. Wake County officials were bracing for staffing shortages on Monday, November 10, and some educators are talking about adding a call-out on November 17 that could involve larger numbers due to more time to plan.

These protests were preceded by an October 22 sick-out in Union County, where hundreds of teachers demanded a \$2,000 local pay supplement long promised by county commissioners. The board ultimately approved only half that amount on November 6, preventing a second planned walkout for November 7.

Together, these actions reveal educators’ growing determination to resist eroding pay and conditions and an administration committed to defunding public education and dismantling social programs.

Predictably, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Association of Educators (CMAE) issued a statement on November 4 disavowing the call-out. “Our power as educators comes from unity, strategy, and collective action, not isolated walkouts,” declared CMAE President Amanda Thompson. The group urged members to focus on “before-school walk-ins,” letter-writing campaigns, and

spring lobbying when the legislature reconvenes.

This appeal for “strategic effort” comes four months after the budget deadline passed, during which time CMAE officials did nothing to organize statewide action while teachers worked without raises. Only when rank-and-file educators began circulating the anonymous call-out did it break its silence to warn teachers not to act.

Instead of mobilizing educators in a sustained fight, the CMAE promotes token “walk-ins” and appeals to legislators. In practice, this means telling teachers to wait while their conditions continue to deteriorate. The same union bureaucracies have presided over a decade of wage stagnation, growing workloads, and the steady privatization of public education. Their refusal to act exposes not caution but political alignment with both big-business parties and their bipartisan program of austerity.

The events in North Carolina this week recall the 2018 wildcat teacher strikes that erupted in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, North Carolina and other states in opposition to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) bureaucracies. The AFT and NEA officials opposed these strikes from the beginning, sought to delay and limit them, and with the support of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and other pseudo-left supporters of the union apparatus and Democratic Party, finally shut them down. Teachers were told to “remember in November” and vote for Democrats while their demands for funding and raises went unmet.

The same logic operates today. The CMAE and NCAE—and their parent organizations in the AFT and NEA—preach “unity” but define it as compliance. They act not as instruments of workers’ struggle but as mechanisms for defusing opposition and channeling it into safe political forms.

The November call-out expresses the deep anger of educators who have seen their living standards collapse while politicians and union officials trade empty promises. To move forward, teachers must transform that anger into action by organizing independent rank-and-file committees in every school and district.

These committees should unite teachers, bus drivers, custodians and parents across counties and states to demand full funding for public education and the

provision of universal, publicly funded healthcare as a social right, not a private burden tied to employment.

Only the independent, democratic mobilization of the working class can end the subordination of every social right, education, healthcare and housing, to the profit demands of capitalism, and build a society organized on the basis of human need rather than private wealth.

*Join the fight to build the Educators Rank-and-File Committees Network by filling out the form below.*



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