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Local sales and use tax for education

We endorse the quarter-cent education tax, which could generate as much as \$9.2 million in its first full year for Durham Public Schools, Durham Technical Community College and early childhood development for the county's youngest residents.

Earlier this year, our state legislators failed to renew a temporary 1-cent sales tax that previously had helped save the jobs of thousands of educators statewide. Without this revenue, more teaching jobs will be on the chopping block again.

As county commissioners assured in a resolution last week, the money from this tax would go to education, the broadest and perhaps most crucial service the county provides.

About 89 percent of the revenue would go to Durham Public Schools to maintain the jobs of teachers and other school-level personnel as the district endures federal and state funding woes. Part of that allocation would also pay the debt on capital projects for the district, including new schools. About 9 percent—roughly \$825,000 in the first full collection year—would go to Durham Tech. Most of the money would provide need-based grants for students; the number of them receiving some form of financial aid has doubled since 2009.

Just over 2 percent of the revenue would go Durham's Partnership for Children to ready students for kindergarten. Given state-level cuts this year to programs focused on early childhood development, these funds would provide more support in the critical years before kindergarten that can set students on a path to success.

One penny for every four dollars we spend is a small price to support teaching jobs, modern facilities and students trying to earn their degrees, especially when education in Durham County continues to be a top concern for voters, according to a poll commissioned by the county in February. Of the more than 400 registered voters surveyed, two-thirds said they would support a quarter-cent sales tax. (The survey has a 5 percent margin of error.)