

# Chattooga County Schools

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Bonnie Fletcher  
Chad Dodd  
Derrick Eckroat

## Chattooga County Schools Board of Education Determines Opt-Out of HB 581 is in Best Interest of Schools, Begins Opt-Out Process

**Summerville, GA** – On Tuesday, January 7, 2025, during its' Called Board of Education Meeting, the Chattooga County Board of Education determined that opting out of House Bill 581 (HB 581), the recently enacted statewide floating homestead exemption, is in the best interest of Chattooga County Schools. As a result, the Board will begin the process of hosting three public hearings required by law to formalize this decision.

The public hearings will be held on the following dates:

Hearing One: Friday, January 17, 2025, 7:00 am

Hearing Two: Tuesday, January 21, 2025, 6:00 pm

Hearing Three: Thursday, January 23, 2025, 5:00 pm

All hearings will take place at the Chattooga County Education Center, and community members are encouraged to attend and participate in this important discussion.

House Bill 581, passed in 2024 by the Georgia General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Brian Kemp, creates a floating homestead exemption that limits annual increases in taxable home values to the prior year's inflation rate. The exemption automatically applies to all local governments, including school districts, unless they opt out by March 1, 2025. For school districts, the exemption poses significant challenges, as it could reduce local tax revenue while offering no option to recoup losses through the new local sales tax created by the bill.

“Opting out of HB 581 was a decision made with the future of our children at heart,” said Board Chair Lori Brady. “This community values its schools, its teachers, and the opportunities we provide to every student. Ensuring stable funding for Chattooga County Schools means we can continue to offer quality education and protect the programs and resources that make a real difference in the lives of our kids. Our students always come first, and this decision reflects that commitment.”

During the January 7 meeting, Superintendent Michelle Helie presented an overview of HB 581 and its potential financial impact on Chattooga County Schools. Local tax revenue accounts for over \$8.2 million annually—critical funding that supports programs, teacher salaries, and school improvements. Board members discussed the risks posed by the legislation and determined that opting out was necessary to protect the district's financial stability and ensure continued support for students and staff.

The three public hearings will provide an opportunity for community members to share their perspectives and participate in the decision-making process. After the hearings, the Board will take formal action to opt out of the exemption before the March 1 deadline.

## Expect Success

The Chattooga County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability in its programs, activities, or employment practices.

INTENT TO OPT OUT OF HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

The Chattooga County Board of Education intends to opt out of the statewide adjusted base year ad valorem homestead exemption for the Chattooga County School District.

All concerned citizens are invited to the public hearing on this matter to be held at:

**Chattooga County Education Center (206 Penn Street, Summerville, GA 30747)**

**on January 17, 2025, at 7:00 AM.**

The time and place of additional public hearings on this matter are at:

**Chattooga County Education Center (206 Penn Street, Summerville, GA 30747)**

**on January 21, 2025, at 6:00 PM**

and

**January 23, 2025, at 5 PM.**