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Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Colorado League of Charter Schools. Don't forget to add srader@coloradoleague.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

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Charting the Capitol Charter Equalization Clears First Committee Test

After hours of moving testimony from a number of charter public school parents and representatives, [Senate Bill 17-061](#) - League legislation that aims to level the funding playing field for charter public schools across Colorado - cleared its first committee vote last week. It will now head to the full Senate soon for consideration. In the meantime, we need your help [reaching out to legislators](#) -- passage of this bill will require participation from the Colorado charter school community.

Read on for further details about contacting your legislators as well as for updates on other education-related issues in motion at the Capitol. And as always, don't hesitate to contact us at the information provided at the end of this newsletter should you have any legislative questions or concerns.

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Charter Equalization Latest

Our bill calling for equal local funding for charter public school students ([Senate Bill 17-061](#)) cleared its first committee test last week when it passed out of the Senate Education Committee with a 4-3 vote. *Thank you* to the following list of testifiers from the charter community whose compelling words left a distinct impression on committee members:

- Jonathan Berg, CEO, James Irwin Charter Schools
- Sonya Camarco, Board Member, Monument Academy
- Natalene Espinoza, Parent, DSST Public Schools
- Martha Gonzalez, Parent, KIPP Colorado Schools
- Bill Kurtz, CEO, DSST Public Schools
- Jon Orris, Director/Principal, Paradox Valley Charter School
- Gina Schley, Parent/Board Member, Mountain Phoenix Community School
- Wendy Sullivan, Executive Director, Montessori del Mundo Charter School
- Kaye Taavialma, Executive Director, Ricardo Flores Magón Academy

The bill will head to the full Senate soon. In order to gain as much bipartisan support as possible, [your legislators need to hear from you](#). Phone calls are ideal, but email messages work also. See below for instructions on contacting your State Senator via phone, or follow [this link](#) to a pre-formatted message that will assist with contacting your Senator via email. Either way, please contact them early, contact them often, and be sure to forward this information to as many members of your community as possible.

Instructions for contacting your State Senator via phone:

- Click on the following link to go to our Grassroots Action Center: <http://coloradoleague.org/?actioncenter>

- Once there, enter your zip code and address under "Find Officials" to find your elected officials
- Under "Your State Officials," click on the name of your State Senator
- Dial their Capitol phone and use [this script](#) to either leave a message or ask them directly for their support of Senate Bill 17-061

Instructions for contacting your State Senator via email:

- Click on the following link to go to a pre-formatted email message:
<http://coloradoleague.org/?page=actioncenter&vsrc=%2fcampaigns%2f50100%2frespond>
- Personalize the message with details about your school, why it matters to you, and why equalized funding is so important for your school and the sector
- Enter your contact information and click send to have the email sent from your address

Looking for more details on the bill?

- [Click here for a fact sheet on the bill](#)
- [Click here for full bill text](#)
- Follow [this link to a guest commentary](#) on the bill from former Speaker of the Colorado House Terrance Carroll and former Colorado Senate President Peter Groff that recently appeared in the Denver Post
- Click [here](#) and [here](#) for links to recent stories on the bill from both Chalkbeat Colorado and The Colorado Springs Gazette

Your Investment in Action: The League Protects Against Anti-Charter Legislation

Last week the League successfully halted an attempt to divert \$5 million out of the state's \$25 million Charter Capital Construction Fund. Developed in the early 2000's, the Charter Capital Construction Fund was created to help address the acute facilities needs of charter public schools, now estimated at an average cost of \$786 per student across every charter school in the state.

Introduced in order to create a new competitive grant program for school technology needs, [House Bill 17-1082](#) would have taken \$5 million out of the Charter Capital Construction Fund to fund this program. While we certainly don't object to more resources for school technology needs, we do object to taking those resources strictly from a pool of dollars that most charter schools desperately need. The League worked with sponsors to craft an amendment that would ensure these dollars don't come out of the Charter Capital Construction pot. That amendment was formally adopted in committee last week.

Speak Out Against HB-17-1184: Charters Must Return Money for Students that Leave after Count Day

Also in the category of direct anti-charter legislation was a bill introduced last week ([House Bill 17-1184](#)) that singles out charter public schools by saying they should return money for students that leave after count day. Despite the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that charter schools in Colorado have any higher rates of students leaving after count day than any other schools in the state ([see here](#)), the legislative sponsor of this bill still felt compelled to bring it forward. We have little reason to believe it will gain traction, but it does still need to have a committee hearing, which is currently scheduled for Monday, March 13, at 1:30 PM in House Education. If potentially interested in providing testimony, particularly if you're with an AEC, please contact Dan Schaller at dschaller@coloradoleague.org.

Join Us for Friday "Legislative Lunch" Calls

The League continues to host weekly conference calls with up-to-the-minute details on the preceding week's legislative developments. These calls take place over the lunch hour (from 12:00-12:30) on Fridays and can be accessed by dialing 1-800-977-8002 and inserting access code 577658#. Legislative Lunch calls will continue every Friday (unless otherwise noted) at noon through May 12.

Please note: There will be no call this Friday, February 24, due to the annual Colorado Charter Schools Conference.

Get the Facts: League Releases Issue Brief on Charter Accountability

The League is regularly pushing back against myths and misinformation that persist about charter public schools. One of the aspects of charter schools that people, including legislators, often have questions about is accountability. They want to know in what ways charter schools - as recipients of public tax dollars - are accountable, and in what ways that accountability may or may not differ from other public schools.

The short answer, as recipients of this newsletter well know, is that Colorado charter public schools face strict accountability standards that make them just as - if not more - accountable than other public schools in the state. But in order to provide more details on the subject and educate legislators and the public more generally, the League has developed several resources on charter accountability. They include:

1. A [short issue brief entitled "Colorado Charter Public Schools Face Strict Accountability Standards"](#) that lays out the many ways in which charter schools are accountable to their students, their families, their community, their authorizer and the state
2. A [one-page synopsis entitled "Colorado Charter School Basics"](#) that outlines many of the key concepts contained in the above brief
3. Finally, we've posted a number of "get the facts" videos about Colorado charter schools to [our Facebook page](#). Like us to keep up with the latest and learn more.

Because many of you encounter the same myths and misinformation we do, we wanted to make sure you had copies of these resources. Please take a look, and should you have any related questions or suggestions for additional issue briefs, please let us know.

Other News of Note

Legislative Compromise on Testing Begins to Take Shape

As highlighted in [the previous edition of this newsletter](#), a number of legislative proposals related to testing have been introduced thus far. These include [House Bill 17-1062](#), [House Bill 17-1117](#) and [Senate Bill 17-101](#), all of which had committee hearings this week - and all of which failed to make it out of those committees. Why? Because a new testing bill emerged on the scene - [House Bill 17-1181](#) - that conforms with Governor Hickenlooper's stated desire to not significantly curtail ninth grade testing, which is something all the other proposals would have done. By contrast, HB17-1181 keeps ninth grade testing but, importantly, shifts it from the current PARCC requirement to an assessment aligned with tests from the SAT family currently given in 10th and 11th grades. HB17-1181 emerged unanimously from the House Education Committee this week, and with such strong bipartisan support, seems likely on the fast track to becoming law.

Your Feedback Needed on ESSA and Standards

In order to demonstrate that Colorado meets the requirements of ESSA (the Every Student Succeeds Act) and to access the funding allocated to the state, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) must submit a plan to the United States Department of Education for approval. Fundamental to the requirements of the ESSA plan is that the department engage in meaningful consultation with a broad range of education stakeholders in developing the plan (the League has been closely involved in ongoing consultation and state plan development) and, once a draft of the plan has been completed, to make the plan available for public comment. The draft plan is now available and can be accessed by [clicking here](#). The window for public comment is open until Friday, March 10. Your feedback is welcome and encouraged.

Another area where your feedback is needed is on the state's review and revision of the Colorado Academic Standards. Passed in 2008, Senate Bill 08-212 - also known as Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids, CAP4K - calls on the state to review and revise our standards on or before July 1, 2018 and every six years thereafter. In order to facilitate the 2018 review, CDE has developed an online standards review system to enable all Coloradans to provide specific feedback on every expectation within all 10 content areas of the Colorado Academic Standards. This is your chance to provide feedback directly to the committees that will be making recommendations for revisions to the standards. More information as well as a link to the feedback system, which is open until April 30, 2017, can be found [here](#).

Complete List of Education Legislation

Our friends at *Chalkbeat Colorado* continue to produce one of the most comprehensive and up-to-date lists of all education-related legislation. [Click here](#) for the latest and don't hesitate to contact us

should you have any questions about specific legislation contained here.

Upcoming Advocacy Opportunities

Advocacy Training Sessions - Colorado Charter Schools Conference

The League is offering two advocacy training sessions at the Colorado Charter Schools Conference on Thursday, February 23, at the Omni Interlocken Resort in Broomfield. If you're attending the conference and interested in advocacy, please plan on joining us for these trainings.

Telling Your Charter School Story

Thursday, February 23, 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM

One of the first steps toward effective charter school advocacy is being able to tell your charter school story in a clear and compelling fashion. Attend this session to learn tools and techniques of effective storytelling from a national advocacy expert.

Developing an Effective Advocacy Campaign

Thursday, February 23, 4:00 PM - 5:15 PM

What are the steps that go into building a sustained advocacy campaign that will get results for your school and students? How do you best ensure success? Attend this session to hear strategies from a national advocacy expert and to begin building out your school's next advocacy plan.

Charter School Advocacy Day

Join us for [Charter School Advocacy Day](#) on Thursday, April 13, from 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM in Denver. Attend this event to learn about the Colorado legislative process, garner helpful tips about effective advocacy, understand current education bills with impacts on charter schools, visit the State Capitol, meet elected officials and share your story about the importance of charter public schools.

In addition to parents and other charter advocates, we encourage staff and students to get involved in this day, too! After all, who makes a better advocate than the students currently attending charter public schools? We encourage middle school and high school teachers and a small group (10 maximum) of their students to participate. Travel subsidies are available on a first-come, first-served basis!

[Click here to register](#). Questions? Contact Dan Schaller at dschaller@coloradoleague.org.

Sincerely,
Colorado League of Charter Schools' Policy and Advocacy Team

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