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
Turning Our Attention to the House

"Colleagues, it would be easier and more politically expedient if I just voted no on this bill. And I can't tell you how tempting that is. But I can't do that. Because our public education system is broken. There’s something broken when you can graduate Valedictorian of your high school class and still need remedial classes when you get to college. There’s something broken when you start freshman year of high school with more than 500 students and only 216 graduate. ... I can no longer look the kids in the eye that attend charter schools in my district -- that have the same exact demographics as the public schools in my district that traditional public schools do -- and try to justify to them that because of the school that they go to, that they get less funding." -Senator Dominick Moreno (D-Commerce City)

With these stirring and courageous words, Senator Dominick Moreno (D-Commerce City) signaled his intent to support Senate Bill 17-061, setting in motion a strong 22-13 bipartisan vote in favor of charter public school equity by the Colorado State Senate.

Next, the bill heads to the House, where it also has bipartisan support. Yet the key question now is: Will it even get a fair hearing? Or will it be sent to the "kill committee"?

You can help determine the outcome. Because of you, state senators paid attention and did the right thing for all public school students. Now we need your help with House reps. Colorado state representatives will listen when their constituents speak up. Can we count on you to make your voice heard?

Read on for details about contacting your representatives as well as for updates on other education-related issues currently in motion. 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.

Senate Bill 61 Clears Senate with Strong Bipartisan Support
Your Investment In Action: The League Pushes Back Against Harmful Anti-Charter Legislation
"Legislative Lunch" Calls Continue This Friday
Other News of Note: State Board Weighs in on ESSA, Standards Feedback Still Being Accepted, Other Education Legislation
In Case You Missed It: League Releases Issue Brief on Charter Accountability

Senate Bill 61 Heads to the House
After hours of debate, Senate 17-061 cleared the Senate earlier this week with a convincing 22-13 margin. Amendments were added related to both a phase-in and possible clarification of voter intent on past mill levy overrides (click here for the latest version of the bill), but the strong showing in the Senate creates critical bipartisan momentum as the bill now heads to the Democratically-controlled House.

How were we able to accomplish this? Because of demonstrations like this one:
These are pictures of the 50+ charter public school representatives who, on just a week's notice, joined us for a Morning of Action at the Capitol on Monday, March 6. Because of their collective presence, we were able to convincingly make the statement that no public school student's education should be valued any less than another's simply because they attend a school with the word "charter" in its name. These are sentiments that have been reflected in newspapers across the state over the past couple weeks, including The Denver Post, The Colorado Springs Gazette, the Aurora Sentinel, the Fort Collins Coloradoan and The Pueblo Chieftain.

But we can't let up now. We need to redouble our efforts on the House side, which begins with contacting your representatives TODAY. Unless they hear loud and clear from their constituents on this issue, it'll be far too easy to succumb to opponents' outcries and not give charter equity the fair hearing it deserves. Before you leave for Spring Break - please follow the instructions below, reach out to your state representatives today, and tell them why they should support Senate Bill 61.

**Instructions for contacting your state representative via phone:**

- Click on the following link to go to the League's Grassroots Action Center: [http://coloradoleague.org/?actioncenter](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 representative
- Dial their Capitol phone and use [this script](http://coloradoleague.org/?page=actioncenter&vvsrc=%2fcampaigns%2f50100%2frespond) to either leave a message or ask them directly for their support of Senate Bill 17-061

**Instructions for contacting your state representative via email or social media:**

- Click on the following link to go to pre-formatted email and social media messages: [http://coloradoleague.org/?page=actioncenter&vvsrc=%2fcampaigns%2f50100%2frespond](http://coloradoleague.org/?page=actioncenter&vvsrc=%2fcampaigns%2f50100%2frespond)
- Personalize the messages with details about your school or your child(ren), why this bill matters to you, and why equalized funding is so important for your school, your students and the charter community as a whole
- Enter your contact information and click send to have the messages sent from either your email or social media accounts

Looking for more details on Senate Bill 61?

- [Click here for a fact sheet on the bill](http://coloradoleague.org/?page=actioncenter&vvsrc=%2fcampaigns%2f50100%2frespond)
- [Click here for the latest bill text](http://coloradoleague.org/?page=actioncenter&vvsrc=%2fcampaigns%2f50100%2frespond)
- Follow the links below to a number of positive articles on the bill that have recently been published in newspapers throughout the state:
  - [Denver Post editorial board](https://www.denverpost.com/)
  - [Denver Post guest commentary by former Speaker of the Colorado House Terrance Carroll and former Colorado Senate President Peter Groff](https://www.denverpost.com/)
  - [An opinion piece by charter school parents in the Fort Collins Coloradoan](https://www.coloradoan.com/)
  - [Coloradoan guest commentary by former U.S. Congressman Bob Schaffer](https://www.coloradoan.com/)
  - [Colorado Springs Gazette editorial board](https://www.gazetteregister.com/)
  - [Gazette guest commentary by Ken Tuchman, chairman and CEO of TeleTech](https://www.gazette.com/)
  - [An opinion piece by a charter school parent in the Aurora Sentinel](https://www.sentinel.com/)
  - [An opinion piece by a charter school parent in The Pueblo Chieftain](https://chieftain.com/)
Your Investment in Action: The League Pushes Back Against Harmful Anti-Charter Legislation

In the last edition of this newsletter, we highlighted a harmful piece of anti-charter legislation (House Bill 17-1184) that singles out charter public schools by saying they should have to 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 has now been scheduled for Monday, March 27, at 1:30 PM in House Education. If interested in providing testimony, particularly if you’re with an Alternative Education Campus (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.

Other News of Note

State Board of Education Weighs in on ESSA

Last week the Colorado State Board of Education weighed in on the state plan being developed to ensure Colorado's compliance with the new federal education law known as the Every Student Succeeds Act. One place the League has been leading the conversation on the plan has been in the development of a state definition of "out-of-field teacher" that the new law requires. Certain special interest groups have been trying to tie this definition exclusively to licensure by saying that the only way to demonstrate in-field competence is by holding a teaching license and endorsement from the state. The League pushed back successfully in arguing that there are more ways than just licensure to demonstrate subject-matter expertise. The decision before the State Board last week was whether to adopt the more expansive definition the League and others have been advocating for, which essentially would align the definition with the categories in place under NCLB's "highly-qualified" teacher provisions. With the exception of shifting the college credit hour requirement from 24 hours to 36 at the last minute, the State Board agreed with the more expansive definition and voted to incorporate that approach into Colorado's state plan.

Your Feedback Needed on Standards

CDE continues to solicit feedback 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.

ICYMI: 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. 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.

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

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