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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 Off to a Slow Start with One Notable Exception

The legislative session can often take some time to build momentum. This year is no exception. Much of the first two plus weeks at the Capitol was dedicated to swearing-in ceremonies, opening speeches, and committee hearings focused on bringing everyone up to speed on relevant issues.

The one notable exception to this - particularly for charter supporters - was the early introduction of [Senate Bill 17-061](#). [Supported by the League and a number of bipartisan partners](#), SB17-061 calls on the state to level the playing field for charter public school students by granting them equal access to local tax revenue. It is scheduled for its first committee hearing on Thursday, February 9.

Read on for further details related to this important charter legislation along with additional information on some of the other education conversations currently taking place at the Capitol.

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Charter Equalization Returns

When our efforts related to charter equalization didn't quite make it across the finish line last year, we were clear we would be back to continue advocating for what was fair and right for Colorado's charter public school students. Enter [Senate Bill 17-061](#), this year's equalization effort that was introduced shortly after opening day of the 2017 legislative session and will be up in Senate Education for its first committee hearing on February 9.

This bill essentially has two major components:

1. If a local mill levy override (MLO) was passed for a specific program or operational need that a district charter school has, then the revenue generated by that MLO should go to charter public school students in that district on an equal per-pupil basis. Because the majority of school districts do not currently share this revenue equally, charter school students across the state face an estimated \$20 - \$25 million disparity.
2. It calls on the state to level the playing field for students attending Charter School Institute (CSI) schools by distributing equalization payments to these schools. Because CSI schools are not tied to a school district, they have no access to local MLO revenue in the way school districts do, resulting in an average per-pupil funding gap of over \$900 per student.

[\(Click here for a more detailed one-page overview of the bill\)](#)

No sooner was our bill introduced than opponents immediately challenged it with many of their [same tired arguments](#) and misinformation about charter public schools. We [pushed back quickly](#) to set the record straight, but you can bet this won't be the last time pushback will be needed. That's where you all come in. **We will need your consistent help throughout session to advocate for equity and make sure this issue is front-and-center in legislators' minds.** Please be on the lookout for Action Alerts from the League's advocacy network (COCAN), and respond to these alerts as quickly and often as you can. Not sure if you're signed up to receive these alerts? [Click here to signup TODAY.](#)

We Need Your Stories!

Are you in a charter school that does not receive equal funding from your district? Are you a CSI school that has zero access to local tax revenue? If so, what are the specific things you haven't been able to provide your students as a result of these inequities? And if you're fortunate enough to be in a school that does receive equal funding from your district, we need your stories, too! What specific things have you been able to accomplish and/or provide your students as a result of equal funding? What would you have to give up if this money went away?

If you are able to share your story, please contact Dan Schaller at dschaller@coloradoleague.org to schedule a brief interview, submit it, or to discuss possible testimony at an upcoming hearing.

Get the Facts: Charter School Videos

Each week, the League is posting short educational videos about charters on its Facebook page. Be sure to [like our page](#) and share these videos to help debunk the myths that charter opponents are actively promoting. In case you missed them, here are links to the videos that have been promoted so far.

[Charter Schools: Public or Private?](#)

[Charter Public Schools: Who Can Attend?](#)

[Charter Public Schools: An Opportunity for Every Child](#)

Join Us for Friday "Legislative Lunch" Calls

New this year, the League is hosting 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 noon to 1:00 PM) on Fridays and can be accessed by dialing 1-800-977-8002 and inserting access code 577658#. Legislative Lunch calls started on Friday, January 20, and will continue every Friday at noon through May 12. **Please join us for this week's call on Friday, February 3rd at noon.**

Other News Of Note

Your Investment in Action: ESSA Definition of Out-of-Field Teacher

The League has been closely involved in the ongoing roll-out of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) federal education law. One element of this law that we are keeping an eye on is the definition of "out-of-field teacher" that states are required to develop. If defined too narrowly, charter schools could be disproportionately impacted because of the hiring freedoms they possess and the fact that not all teachers in charter schools need to be fully credentialed by the state. The League engaged closely in conversations as part of the state's [ESSA Hub committee](#) to ensure this definition is not limited solely to licensure and instead captures alternate ways of demonstrating subject matter competency. Out of these efforts, a successful 9-6 vote in favor of more expansive guidelines was secured. Next up, the State Board of Education must decide whether or not to take the Hub's recommendation. We will keep you updated!

2017-18 School Finance Latest

The Governor's [fall proposal for 2017-18 school funding](#) called for an average increase of \$180 per student across the state next school year. It was always a question as to whether the legislature would be able to adhere to this increase as proposed. But the situation became even more complicated when an unexpected shortfall of \$135 million was recently discovered. Acting quickly, Governor Hickenlooper and his team came forward with two proposals - [one involving taxes on recreational marijuana; the other involving a cut to the senior homestead property tax exemption](#) - to try and address the deficit and keep the fall budget proposal intact. Neither is without controversy and so it remains to be seen whether the split legislature will adopt them or look for other means for covering the shortfall. Either way, we'll be sure to keep you updated as the ongoing conversation unfolds.

Various Testing Proposals in Play

One area that has received some attention in the legislature's early days is that of testing. There are now three proposals on the table that look to further reduce the amount of annual testing required by the state. They include: [House Bill 17-1062](#), [House Bill 17-1117](#), and [Senate Bill 17-101](#). Governor Hickenlooper has taken a hard line on 9th-grade testing saying that he would veto any bill that attempts to eliminate it, thus each of the proposals introduced thus far will likely face an uphill battle. Please send your feedback to dschaller@coloradoleague.org.

Complete List of Education-Related Bills

We're still building out our complete database of 2017 education legislation. In the meantime, view [Chalkbeat's Bill Tracker](#) for a rundown of the many bills in motion. And as always, don't hesitate to email or call us at the contact information listed below should you have any questions about specific legislation under consideration.

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.

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.

Visit www.COCharterConference to register for the Conference, or email [Dan Schaller](mailto:Dan.Schaller) for more information.

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.

A Special Thanks to Advocacy Training Attendees

Thank you to all those who attended the advocacy training on January 14 with Derrell Bradford. We had over 50 attendees both in audience and with remote access. A special thanks to Derrell who did a wonderful job providing participants with tools and techniques for effective charter school advocacy. If you are interested in gaining more knowledge about this topic, [click here to view the advocacy training video](#).

A Successful School Choice Week Rally

The School Choice Rally at the Capitol on January 26 was a huge success! There were over 800 people in attendance supporting the wide variety of school options available in our state. We had a great turnout of charter public school students including groups from Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Canon City and the Denver metro area. We'd like to thank the legislators who attended and spoke in support of school choice. Also, thanks to those students who shared their stories or performed during the rally. [Click here to view a quick video recap of the day!](#)

Sincerely,
Colorado League of Charter Schools
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