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Charting the Capitol Legislative Updates - April, 2016

One Month to Go

It's been a relatively quiet legislative session on major education issues thus far, but with just a little over a month to go, the League continues to push on a number of fronts for positive charter outcomes at the Capitol. Conversations continue related to the large charter omnibus we previewed in [the last edition of this newsletter](#) and, while it has not yet been introduced, we hope to have updates related to this package for you very soon. At the same time, the League has launched a strong counteroffensive against a harmful piece of anti-charter legislation that seeks to remove charters' ability to pursue automatic waivers. Read on for details related to this as well as a number of other issues the League has impacted, and as always, please don't hesitate to reach out to any members of our team (contact information included below) should you have questions or concerns related to issues occurring at the Capitol.

Help Push Back on House Bill 16-1343

A key part of charter public school innovation in Colorado is the ability to obtain waivers from certain parts of state statute, an ability that is under attack right now by [a damaging proposal](#) at the Capitol.

Backed by the Colorado Education Association and sponsored by Representative Dominick Moreno (D-Commerce City), [HB16-1343](#) seeks to eliminate charters' ability to pursue [automatic waivers](#) despite the fact that automatic waivers represent commonsense policymaking at its best. [Click here](#) for further details on the proposal and what exactly it seeks to do.

The League launched a strong counteroffensive against this proposal last week when we sent out a [COCAN action alert](#) asking members and charter advocates to contact key legislators to tell them to stop this harmful and unnecessary piece of legislation. That outreach has been having an impact, and if you have not already done so, we encourage you to follow [this link](#) to reach out to these elected officials today.

School Finance Silver Linings

Going into this legislative session, some were predicting that the [negative factor](#) would need to grow in order to help balance the state budget. This would have represented less funding going into K-12 public schools next year.

But as conversations have continued at the Capitol over the past few months, legislators have sought solutions to this problem in order to keep as many dollars as possible in the hands of our state's schools and their students. This work came to fruition earlier this week when the [2016-17 school finance bill](#) was introduced and, as part of that proposal, the negative factor would be held level heading into next year. What this would mean is that, if passed as currently drafted, average state per-pupil funding would grow from \$7,312 this year to \$7,424 next, or an increase of 1.2 percent. We'll be sure to keep you posted as the proposal makes its way through the process, but in the meantime, be sure to check out [this link](#) for the impact this bill would have on individual districts.

At the same time - and as a result of [successful League advocacy efforts from two years ago](#) - the proposed state budget was released, and it reflects an increase of an additional \$3 million for the state's Charter Capital Construction Fund for next school year. We're not quite sure yet what, if

passed, this would translate into at a per-pupil level, but it does bring the total amount of money in this fund up to \$25 million, which is a far cry from the \$7 million it stood at just two years ago. Stay tuned for further details on per-pupil distribution amounts as this proposal also makes its way through the process and further details emerge.

Charter Funding Transparency

League-backed legislation from two years ago called for the creation of the state's first-ever report showing how much local mill levy override (MLO) revenue each school district brings in and then how much of that they share with their charters. The first of these annual reports was just released this week, and details related to it can be found [here](#).

In addition to the MLO data, individual district-authorized charter schools are allowed to submit an addendum request to CDE that examines the overall level of funding distributed by the school district to the charter schools of the district, including:

- Capital Construction and Facilities Funding
- Funding for Technology
- Any other funding that the school district distributes to charter schools of the district

The League views this as a prime opportunity to gain further insight and transparency into other sources of funding and whether districts are sharing them equitably with their charters. We strongly encourage you or someone from your team to complete and submit the following *very short* [addendum report](#) to CDE prior to the April 15 deadline.

Other Legislation of Note

While less charter-specific, a number of other education-related proposals have started moving at the Capitol. Here's a brief synopsis of several of them:

- [HB16-1354 - Debt-Free Schools Act](#)
 - The bill authorizes a school district, with voter approval, to impose an additional mill levy for the sole purpose of funding its capital construction and facility maintenance needs without borrowing money.
 - League efforts led to the successful addition of [an amendment](#) in committee to ensure individual charter school's needs would be considered as part of these proposals.
 - Status: Cleared the House, headed to Senate
- [HB16-1423 - Student Data Collection Use Security](#)
 - Creates expanded protections for privacy of student data that apply to software vendors, districts and the state.
 - Status: Scheduled to be heard in House Education on Monday, April 11
 - Chalkbeat Colorado story [here](#)
- [SB16-148 - Require Civics Test Before Graduate High School](#)
 - Would require ninth graders to correctly answer 60 questions on the federal naturalization test to graduate from high school. Students could take the test multiple times through 12th grade in order to pass.
 - Status: Passed Senate Education, headed to Senate floor
 - Chalkbeat Colorado story [here](#)

League Legislative Tracker

Finally, if you're looking for details on other education-related legislation not highlighted here, be sure to check out our [Legislative Tracker](#) for information on all current education bills. If you'd like more background on any of this legislation, please don't hesitate to reach out and we'd be happy to provide further context.

Sincerely,

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