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## Charting the Capitol Legislative Updates - April 14, 2014

### Heading into the Homestretch

With just four weeks remaining in the 2014 legislative session, there is still much work that needs to be done. That said, some potentially very encouraging progress was made over the last couple of weeks on the Student Success Act, legislation that could have far-reaching impacts on Colorado's charter school community. Read on for further details on this and other legislative news of note, and as always, please don't hesitate to reach out should you have any questions or concerns.

#### **HB 14-1292 Clears House, Makes Way Toward Senate**

After a couple intense weeks of lobbying, House Bill 14-1292 (the Student Success Act) finally made its way out of the House last Thursday with a strong bipartisan vote (51-14).

The League was a significant part of these lobbying efforts, and as such, successfully managed to maintain virtually all of the legislation's favorable charter provisions.

As it makes its way over to the Senate, here is how the bill is shaping up at present:

- Approximately \$11.5 million NEW capital construction dollars for charters in the 2014-15 school year - this would be on top of the \$7 million that is currently there, and it is a number that would increase to approximately \$18 million for the 2015-16 school year and every year thereafter
- A one-time infusion of \$6.5 million into the state's charter debt reserve fund in order to increase the cap on the Moral Obligation Program from \$400 million to \$500 million so that more schools can take advantage of the program's enhanced bond financing
- A \$110 million reduction in the negative factor - this funding, in concert with that proposed in this year's version of the School Finance Act (HB 14-1298), would increase next year's statewide per-pupil average to \$7,019 from an average of just \$6,652 this year - [click here](#) for an analysis of what this additional funding would mean on a district-by-district basis
- Financial transparency - the current version of the bill retains much of what was proposed in the original, including enhanced district transparency in the areas of mill levy sharing and special education charges, two provisions of particular interest to charters
- An additional \$20 million for ongoing implementation of the READ Act, the 2012 law that requires literacy evaluations of all K-3 students and creation of individual literacy plans for students with reading deficiencies
- A proposed \$30.5 million increase in English Language Learner (ELL) funding has been retained but moved to the School Finance Act
- Finally, the bill's original proposal to spend \$10 million to convert schools to the average daily membership (ADM) method of counting enrollment has been removed

As with any package this big, however, there are bound to be several more twists and turns along the way, which is why it is imperative that legislators continue to hear from us about the importance of this bill. If you have not already, **we encourage you to reach out to your State Senator and explain to him or her how HB 14-1292 would benefit your school.** [Click here](#) to quickly look up your school's State Senator, [here for an HB 14-1292 fact sheet](#), and [here for an HB 14-1292 form letter](#) to assist in your outreach.

### **Attend the Colorado Charter Schools Rally THIS THURSDAY (April 17)**

And with so much potentially positive charter legislation in the works, what better time to come down to the Capitol and speak out in favor of charters than this Thursday, April 17? That's when we'll be joined by more than 500 students, parents, and teachers at the annual [Colorado Charter Schools Rally](#) on the Capitol West Steps at noon. Hear from state legislators who support choice and innovation in education, enjoy student performances and cheer for the winners of this year's Charter School Art Contest. Please join us. WE NEED YOUR VOICE!

### **Mill Bill in Senate Education Committee this Wednesday**

Speaking of positive legislation for charters, another League priority, [House Bill 14-1314](#), heads to the Senate Education Committee this Wednesday. This bill seeks to increase the cooperation between school districts and their charters when planning for mill levy elections. It would require that districts include at least one charter representative on any long-term mill levy planning committees they create and that they notify their charters by no later than June 1 if they plan to go to the voters with a mill ballot issue.

[Click here for a League fact sheet](#) on the legislation and [here for a Chalkbeat Colorado story](#) about it. Due largely to League efforts to secure prime Democratic sponsors, the bill emerged from the House with a unanimous 65-0 show of support, and we're optimistic that it will continue on a positive path in the Senate.

### **Keeping Up on the Legislative Latest**

Finally, be sure to check out our [Legislative Tracker](#) for up-to-the-minute details on all current education bills. Of particular interest to many of you might be the following:

- **HB 14-1298: School Finance Act**

In addition to the new ELL dollars mentioned above, this bill would also increase the number of slots in the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) by 5,000 - with an initial preference for those districts and charters seeking to enroll children in full-day kindergarten.

- **HB 14-1202: State Testing Panel**

This bill would create the Standards and Assessments Task Force to study how the statewide student assessment system is administered, how data are used, and the impact of statewide student assessments on local testing systems, instructional time, and administrative workload for school districts and public schools. League efforts ensured that two of the 15 seats on the panel would be filled by charter representatives.

- **SB 14-150: Counselor Corps**

The bill would increase annual funding for the Colorado Counselor Corps program to \$10 million from \$5 million, expand eligibility to all middle and high schools and extend the length of grants to four from three years.

- **SB 14-167: Opportunity Schools Pilot Initiative**

This bill would create a pilot program under which a small cohort of alternative education campuses (AECs) would receive additional per-pupil funding in order to pilot test programs intended to improve achievement for the at-risk students that attend such schools. Given that roughly 25 percent of AECs in Colorado are charters, the League has played an active role in helping to develop and advance this legislation.

- **SB 14-124: Turnaround Leaders Development Program**

This bill would create a School Turnaround Leaders Development Program that would contract with outside providers to develop training programs for school turnaround leaders. The bill also would create a grant program for use by districts and schools that wanted to use the training.

- **HB 14-1156: School Lunch Protection Program**

Current law creates an annual appropriation to provide free lunches at no charge to children in state-subsidized early childhood education programs and students up to the second grade. The bill would extend the age of eligibility to 12th grade and increase the annual appropriation to not more than \$3.5 million.

- **HB 14-1291: Charter Armed School Security**

Under current law, a school district may employ a school security officer who may carry a concealed handgun in the school and on its grounds if the person has a valid concealed carry permit. The bill would grant this authority to a charter school.

And as always, if you have any questions about developments in the legislative session or about content in this newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact me at [dschaller@coloradoleague.org](mailto:dschaller@coloradoleague.org) or Jessica Johnson at [jmjohnson@coloradoleague.org](mailto:jmjohnson@coloradoleague.org).

Sincerely,

Dan Schaller, Director of Advocacy  
Colorado League of Charter Schools

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