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Charting the Capitol Heading into the Home Stretch

With less than two weeks to go in the 2017 Colorado legislative session, there's still plenty to be finalized. What will become of Senate Bill 61 and charter school equity? Where will the 2017-18 school funding conversation land? Will a legislative study group be established to conduct a comprehensive review of our state's school finance system going forward? These are just some of the compelling questions remaining, and legislators have very little time to figure out the answers.

Read on for further details related to these and other topics, and stay tuned for additional updates as the final frenetic weeks unfold. In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact us at the information provided at the end of this newsletter should you have more immediate questions or concerns.

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Charter Equity Latest: Your Voice Still Matters!

It's hard to know exactly where the Senate Bill 61/charter school equity debate will land with just two weeks to go. The good news is that we're still in the fight. Just yesterday, in fact, the Senate Bill 61 language was amended into [Senate Bill 17-296](#), this year's version of the School Finance Act, creating another vehicle through which to continue pressing the issue. Additionally, as evidenced by the floating of [the following proposal](#) this week by two key House Democrats, ongoing conversations have been happening on the House side. We will be sure to let you know as continuing developments unfold.

One thing we can say with certainty is that unless the charter community continues to make its voice heard, our chances of success go down significantly. Just last week, opponents of the bill circulated [the following email](#) that is chock full of lies and misinformation about charter schools. If we hope to successfully counteract these attacks and keep the conversation focused where it belongs - on the tens of thousands of charter school students across the state currently being shortchanged by unfair MLO sharing practices - your legislators need to hear from you. Please help us keep up the pressure by using [the following action alert](#) to contact your representatives and tell them to support charter school equity TODAY.

School Finance Act in Motion

Each year the School Finance Act is typically the measure by which state per-pupil changes are locked in for the following school year. This year's version of that bill - [Senate Bill 17-296](#) - was introduced last week and, as mentioned above, had its first committee hearing yesterday. At that time, not only was the Senate Bill 61 language amended in, but but in another positive

development, an additional \$48 million was dedicated to school funding to help ensure that the so-called negative factor does not grow next year.

What does this all mean? From a per-pupil revenue (PPR) perspective, it means that approximately \$57 per student should be added to the \$178 that was already projected, bringing the current tally on the anticipated increase to statewide average PPR for next year to roughly \$235 per student. As these figures move closer and closer to being finalized, we will be sure to keep you posted.

9th Grade Testing Change Heads to Governor's Desk

[House Bill 17-1181](#), the measure that would eliminate PARCC testing in the 9th grade and replace it with the PSAT, has nearly made it all the way through the legislative process and is about to become law. All that remains is the Governor's signature, which is fully expected in the coming weeks. This important change to our state's testing system will take official effect heading into next school year.

Your Investment In Action: League Engages to Strengthen Transcripts Transfer Bill

Throughout the legislative session the League is constantly on the lookout for bills that could be altered or enhanced to better address specific charter concerns. One such bill - [House Bill 17-1301](#) - conveyed in its introduced version that school districts could not withhold student records necessary for a student's enrollment in another school on account of any fines or fees that student has with his or her prior school. We've heard from many of you who have struggled with timely receipt of transfer student transcripts in the past that the issue isn't necessarily with the district but with the school from which the student is transferring. As such, we worked with bill sponsors to have an amendment added to make it clear that school districts must also ensure that *none of their individual schools* withhold student records on account of fines or fees. Our hope is that this small change will help facilitate the more timely transfer of student records to your school when a new student seeks enrollment.

"Legislative Lunch" Calls Continue this Friday

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 PM - 12:30 PM) on Fridays and can be accessed by dialing 1-800-977-8002 and inserting access code 577658#. Join us this Friday to get the latest. Lunch calls will continue (unless otherwise noted) at noon through May 12.

Charter Nominees Still Needed for New Colorado Teacher Cabinet

Colorado Education Commissioner, Katy Anthes, recently announced the creation of a new Teacher Cabinet to serve as a sounding board for the implementation of state education policy and to brainstorm solutions for some of the challenges facing today's educators. The Commissioner's Teacher Cabinet will be made up of 15 teachers from around the state representing small, medium, large, rural, suburban and urban school systems. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2017-18 cabinet, and *charter representatives are highly encouraged to apply*.

To be considered for the Commissioner's Teacher Cabinet, educators must have at least three years of experience in the classroom and must submit an application, resume and two letters of recommendation to CDE by May 5. Selected educators will serve two years on the cabinet beginning in August 2017. For more information, [click here](#) or [download this flyer](#) on the initiative.

Other News of Note

Early Childhood Discipline and Education Vision Bills Die

When we have a divided legislature such as we currently do, partisan squabbling can often result in some unexpected outcomes at the end of the session. This year is no exception. In the past week or so alone, two bills that were the result of extensive pre-session work and broad stakeholder coalitions - [House Bill 17-1210 on early childhood discipline](#) and [House Bill 17-1287 on the creation of a legislative committee to map out a strategic vision for the future of education in Colorado](#) - died in committee. Because of these actions, the question now remaining is whether a third bill that initially had strong bipartisan support - [House Bill 17-1340 on the creation of a legislative committee to conduct a thorough analysis of our state's school finance formula](#) - will face a similar fate. We'll be sure to keep you posted.

Interesting Twist Added to Teacher Shortage Study

House Bill 17-1003, a bill that would create a strategic plan to address teacher shortages across Colorado, had an interesting amendment tacked on just before it left the Senate Education Committee a couple weeks ago. At the last minute an amendment was approved calling for the same group creating the strategic plan to also research the effects of licensure on student outcomes. Knowing that much of the research shows the connection between licensure and student outcomes to be tenuous at best, we'll be very interested to monitor this group's work.

Complete List of Education Legislation

Chalkbeat Colorado continues 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 there.

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