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Charting the Capitol Just Past the Midway Point

This weekend marked the midway point of the 2018 legislative session, and while there is still much to be finalized over the remaining two months, we're encouraged by the progress we've made toward accomplishing our goals thus far. These past few weeks saw the defeat of damaging anti-charter legislation ([SB18-118](#)), the near-unanimous support of [SB18-160](#) (Charter School Induction and Alternative Licensure Programs) in the Senate, and the advancement of [HB18-1070](#) (Additional Capital Construction Funding) in the House. School finance conversations loom large on the agenda for the next few weeks, after which we should have a clearer sense of where school funding should land heading into the 2018-19 school year. Stay tuned for developments on that front, and in the meantime, be sure to read on for further details on the education legislation we're tracking most closely. Also, don't forget to join us on Fridays at noon for our weekly "[Legislative Lunch](#)" calls, running now through the end of the legislative session on May 9.

[Your Investment in Action: League Helps Defeat Damaging Anti-Charter Legislation \(SB18-118\)](#)
[League-backed SB18-160 \(Charter Induction and Alternative Licensure Programs\) Heads to House](#)
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Your Investment in Action: League Helps Defeat Damaging Anti-Charter Legislation

In early February, a damaging piece of anti-charter legislation ([SB18-118](#)) was introduced that sought to significantly undermine the existing charter school appeals process. Under current law, if a school district denies an application for a charter school or revokes or refuses to renew an existing charter, the charter applicant or charter school can appeal the decision to the State Board of Education. If the State Board remands the decision back to the district and the local school board confirms its prior decision, the charter applicant or charter school can appeal to the State Board again. The State Board may then order the local school board to grant the charter application or reinstate or renew the existing charter.

SB18-118 sought to change this process substantially by removing the second appeal. In other words, under this proposal, if the State Board had remanded a decision back to the district for reconsideration after the first appeal, then whatever the school district then decided would have stood with no opportunity for further appeal.

Clearly, this represented a serious threat to the ongoing health and vitality of the charter sector in Colorado, so the League worked vigorously to oppose it. We testified against it in committee, providing [factual evidence](#) to demonstrate that, far from being biased, the State Board appeals process has actually been a very fair one when looked at over the balance of time. As a result of these efforts, the bill died on a 4-3 vote in committee, guaranteeing that it will not move forward in the legislative process.

League-backed Induction Bill Heads to House

For the better part of the past two decades, charter schools in Colorado have been able to operate independent induction programs and take advantage of alternative licensure pathways. Despite these opportunities being commonplace in charter schools and not encountering any problems in

the past, a recent statutory scan revealed that the law does not technically call out charter schools by name as authorized entities for these programs. As such, one of the pieces of proactive legislation that the League is pursuing this session is a bill to clean up statute to reflect current reality. That bill - [Senate Bill 18-160](#) - was introduced in early February with bipartisan sponsorship, moved through the Senate with only two votes against it, and heads to the House this week where it will be heard in the Education Committee on Wednesday morning. We remain optimistic about its ultimate chance of passage, and will be sure to keep you posted on developments as it now makes its way through the House.

Proposal for Additional Capital Construction Funding Advances

A League-supported effort to increase the overall amount schools receive for capital construction needs saw positive movement in recent weeks when it cleared the House Education Committee with a 12-1 vote on February 21. It now heads to the House Finance Committee, where it will be heard next Monday, March 19. Under current law, 12.5% of the first \$40 million from marijuana excise tax revenue that flows to school construction goes specifically to the state's [Charter School Capital Construction Fund](#). Since the actual amount of marijuana excise tax revenue currently coming in is well in excess of \$40 million, HB18-1070 seeks to divert most of this excess funding to the same school construction channels. This means that if HB18-1070 is ultimately adopted into law, 12.5% of the additional funds would also make their way to charter schools. There's still a long way to go in the process before anything like this would be signed into law. However, it's an encouraging sign that this opportunity for additional facilities funding has gotten off to such a strong bipartisan start. We will continue to keep you informed as the discussion related to this measure progresses.

Next Few Weeks Loom Large for 2018-19 School Funding Decisions

As the legislative session continues to move along, the more decisions related to the budget begin to take shape. This year is no exception, and the next few weeks promise to be pivotal ones in the 2018-19 school funding discussion. First, is the question of CSI funding and whether or not the Joint Budget Committee will adhere to the Governor's budget proposal from the fall and allocate \$5.5 million toward equalization funding for CSI students. That decision will come as part of their education budget "figure-setting" exercise, which is scheduled to take place tomorrow, March 13. If approved there, the allocation will move forward as part of the so-called "Long Bill," which is the annual budget bill that each chamber spends considerable time debating later in March and early April.

Of upcoming consequence for the decision on school funding in general - and how much to increase per-pupil spending heading into next school year - is the revenue forecast currently slated for next Tuesday, March 20. If positive revenue trends continue, the hope is that there will be enough additional resources to meaningfully address both education and transportation; two areas that have emerged as funding priorities for certain key members of the General Assembly.

We'll be sure to keep you posted on developments related to both of these important priorities. If the need for you to contact your legislators on either of these topics should arise, we encourage you to respond immediately to the action alerts we send you.

Proposal to Overhaul PERA Introduced

Just last week, a bill to address what many expected to be a major part of the discussion at the Capitol this year - PERA and the question of what to do about the program's unfunded liability - was introduced. This bill is [Senate Bill 18-200](#). In recognizing how big a factor PERA plays in every school's budget, *we highly recommend taking a close look at the bill and the likely impacts it would have on your school*. Among its recommendations is a proposal to increase employer contributions by two percentage points over the next two years, an element we certainly recognize to have negative repercussions on our schools. At the same time, the bill calls for the creation of a defined-contribution option for workers hired after January 1, 2020. A proposal such as this has many moving parts, so we encourage you to take a closer look - bill summary available [here](#), PERA synopsis available [here](#), and Denver Post article available [here](#). We want to hear your feedback so we can be sure to accurately represent this thinking at the Capitol as the conversation continues to unfold in the session's remaining months.

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 starting at

noon on Fridays and can be accessed by dialing 1-800-977-8002 and inserting access code 9299699#. Legislative Lunch calls started on Friday, January 19, and will continue every Friday through May 11. **Please join us for this week's call on Friday, March 16, at noon.**

Introducing Brandon Hellwig, League's New Associate Director of Organizing

Late last month, the League added an important new member to our advocacy team. His name is Brandon Hellwig. He joins the League as our new Associate Director of Organizing. We look forward to introducing him to you in the coming weeks and months.

As the attacks against charter schools have grown in recent years, it's become increasingly apparent that we have to move forward together as a collective to get our parents and families - of which there are now over 120,000 across the state - organized if we hope to be able to effectively counteract the myths and misinformation being actively spread by opponents. It was with this objective in mind that we created the Associate Director of Organizing position and then went on to conduct a rigorous search process to fill it.

Brandon comes to us with experience both as a community organizer with Charter Parents United in Chicago and as a teacher with KIPP: Chicago. His roots are in Colorado, however, and ever since he returned in 2016, he's been actively involved in local parent and family organizing efforts. We're very excited to have him on board. You should expect to see and hear more from him soon as the League works to expand and diversify our advocacy offerings.

Other News Of Note

ICYMI:Support the Federal Charter Schools Program TODAY

The U.S. Congress is in the midst of making crucial decisions about education funding for next year, so now is our chance to tell Congress to increase funding for charter schools.

Congress needs to increase funding for the Charter Schools Program to \$600 million. This funding will:

- Launch new charter schools;
- Allow successful charter schools to expand and replicate;
- Provide financing assistance to charter schools to acquire, expand, and improve their building; and
- Most importantly, give more students access to the public school that's best for them.

The stakes are high for our schools and our students - and time is short. Please take 30 seconds and act today. Our students and our schools are depending on you! Be sure to ask your friends to take action, too.

Complete List of Education Legislation

Our partners at Chalkbeat Colorado continue to maintain one of the most comprehensive lists of current education legislation available. If interested, check out their 2018 database here.

Please don't hesitate to email or call me at the contact information provided below should you have any questions about specific bills under consideration.

Sincerely,
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