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Charting the Capitol Legislative Updates - April 2014

Keeping Up the Pressure

Over the past few weeks, the Colorado charter community has spoken out in force in support of [House Bill 14-1292](#), the Student Success Act. As a result, this bill recently cleared its first hurdle, emerging out of the House Education Committee with strong bipartisan support. But the journey is far from complete. Over the next few weeks we'll need you to speak out louder than ever if we hope for this package - or another vehicle that equally increases charter school facilities funding - to become law.

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 Passes House Ed, Uncertain Fate Ahead

House Bill 14-1292, legislation that would increase the annual funding earmarked for charter facilities from \$7 million to \$25 million, [passed out of the House Education Committee](#) on March 19 with an 11-1 vote. Unfortunately, the bipartisanship that helped drive this bill through the House is far from a guarantee in the Senate.

If you're signed up for the Colorado Charter Advocacy Network (Colorado CAN) and we hope you are (if not, [click here to sign up](#)), you've been hearing a lot from us lately about the need to contact your elected officials about this piece of legislation. They're hearing loud and clear from opponents of the measure; they need to hear even louder and clearer from us.

So please, reach out and make contact with your Senators. The biggest ever increase in state-level facilities funding for charters is at stake. Click [here](#) to look up your State Senator, [here](#) for an HB 14-1292 fact sheet, and [here](#) for an HB 14-1292 form letter that we are asking as many schools as possible to complete and submit to their Senators. A letter signed by your school's Board of Directors is even more powerful. Thank you for your support.

Mill Bill Headed for Senate

Another League priority, [House Bill 14-1314](#), recently cleared the House - and with a unanimous 65-0 vote at that. 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 notify their charters no later than June 1, if they plan to go to the voters with a mill ballot issue.

While this legislation doesn't immediately get us to our ultimate goal of consistent and equitable

charter access to local tax revenue, we see it as an important building block in the effort. With it in place, districts will no longer be able to ignore their charters outright when considering mill initiatives. We're optimistic that intentionally including charters from the get-go will lead to more collaborative and productive outcomes in the end.

We will keep you updated on the bill's progress as it heads to the Senate, but in the meantime, click [here](#) for a League fact sheet and [here](#) for a Chalkbeat Colorado story on the legislation. And kudos to Jonathan Berg from James Irwin Charter Schools, Rob Clemens from New Vision Charter School, and Ben Ploeger from Eagle Ridge Academy for making the trip down to the Capitol and offering compelling testimony in support of this proposal.

Moral Ob Postponed, Fight Not Over

One League priority that did not fare so well - at least initially - was [Senate Bill 14-139](#). This was legislation that would have increased the cap on the state's [Moral Obligation Program](#) from its current \$400 million level to \$500 million so that more charter schools could take advantage of the state-enhanced financing that the program offers. Unfortunately, however, the proposal was struck down in committee.

We lined up a solid slate of school representatives to testify in support of the bill (see below), all of whom did a fantastic job in painting a very persuasive picture on the necessity and importance of the Moral Ob Program.

But losing the battle does not mean losing the war.

With the bill's failure in committee, we now turn our sights to the larger Student Success Act package where, depending on the level of charter facilities support ultimately included, there may be an opportunity to use a limited amount of those dollars to achieve a victory on the Moral Ob front as well. Stay tuned.

Thank you to the following school representatives for their powerful testimony in support of SB 14-139:

- Rick Boos, Belle Creek Charter School and High Point Academy
- Terry Croy Lewis, High Point Academy
- Erin Kane, American Academy
- Tim Matlick, Woodrow Wilson Academy
- Carol Meininger, Pinnacle Charter School
- Kim Miller, Ridgeview Classical Schools
- Sam Todd, Peak to Peak Charter School

Online Task Force Releases Recommendations

The seven-member [K-12 Online Education Task Force](#), which was assembled in January by a bipartisan group of legislators, concluded its work on March 21 by submitting a list of recommendations for legislative consideration. Click [here](#) for a summary of these recommendations and [here](#) for the group's full report. Working off these recommendations, lawmakers quickly drafted up proposed legislation, a copy of which is available [here](#) and the consideration of which will be taken up in the coming days. If you have any questions or concerns about this proposal, please don't hesitate to send them our way.

Keeping Up on the Latest Legislation

Be sure to check out our [Legislative Tracker](#) for up-to-the-minute details on all current education bills. Also, if you're interested in a more in-depth look at the 2014 legislative session and the League's priorities within it, be sure to follow this [link](#) to a webinar we recently developed on the subject.

Join Us: Colorado Charter Schools Rally, April 17

Come show your school spirit and celebrate charter schools at the annual [Colorado Charter Schools Rally](#) at noon on Thursday, April 17th on the west steps of the Capitol in Denver. Join hundreds of students, parents, teachers, principals, and other advocates in voicing our collective support for charters. Hear from state legislators who support choice and innovation in education. Hear from charter school leaders and students, enjoy student performances and cheer for the winners of the [Charter School Art Contest](#). **The deadline to submit student artwork is this Friday, April 4!**

If you have any questions about developments in the legislative session or about content in this newsletter, please contact me at dschaller@coloradoleague.org or Jessica Johnson at jmjohnson@coloradoleague.org.

Sincerely,

Dan Schaller, Director of Advocacy
Colorado League of Charter Schools

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