With just over one month left in the legislative session, the pace at the Capitol continues to be fast and furious. CASE continues to be actively involved on more than 70 education-related bills, and we’re hoping to see the School Finance Act introduced within the next week or two.

Because our advocacy efforts are so member-driven, we strongly encourage you to stay engaged and share your thoughts and feedback about the legislation under consideration by policymakers. Our next CASE Legislative Committee meeting is next Friday, April 12, at 1:30pm at CASE. Please email ewisman@co-case.org if you plan to attend, and if you wish to participate remotely, call (720) 795-9754 and use the access code 2253.

Thank you for your involvement in CASE!

- Lisa Escárcega, CASE Executive Director

Legislation would cost districts more money, create restrictions on contracts

CASE is opposed to House Bill 1249, which would put in place new requirements for districts entering into any contract for outside professional services over $200,000 in areas including paraprofessional services, clerical services, custodial services, transportation services, food services, and school security services. The provisions of the legislation would go into effect beginning October 1, 2019. Small rural districts and any district contracting for outside professional services through a BOCES would be exempt.

Some key components of House Bill 1249 are listed below, along with CASE’s concerns:

- **Before soliciting proposals for contracted services, a district must complete a cost-benefit analysis of using outside services versus current district personnel.**
  - **CASE concern:** It would be difficult for a district to complete a cost-benefit analysis without having any outside services proposals. Districts would not have the necessary information related to cost, scope of service, and more, to develop a comprehensive and accurate cost-benefit analysis.

- **Requires districts to allow competitive bidding for a professional services contract**
  - **CASE concern:** Most districts already have policies and procedures in place regarding a competitive bid process.
    - Language in the bill would limit a districts’ rights in selecting an outside service provider by setting up certain restrictions, such as a prohibition of using a cooperative purchasing agreement.

- **Districts must review all bids for service in a school board meeting**
  - **CASE concern:** Currently, information pertaining to competitive bid processes are already public and available for review.

- **New requirements potentially increasing the amount of liability insurance an outside services provider would be required to have**
  - **CASE concern:** This new threshold for liability insurance could restrict the number of eligible service providers that a district could contract with and force them into choosing a provider that is more costly or that doesn’t best meet their needs.

Thanks to Brett Johnson From the Aurora Public School District for his testimony on this bill last week. We will keep you posted in the coming weeks.
**Possible changes in the works for READ Act legislation**

As we shared with you in the last *BriefCASE*, Senate Bill 199 proposes changes to the READ Act that have caused some concern among school districts and CASE. As currently written, it places new requirements on school districts related to specific components of READ Plans, minimum time requirements for intervention reading services, a limited list of approved core and intervention programs, and a lack of clarity related to how the legislation would impact ELA students. Additionally, the implementation funding received by school districts would be decreased under the provisions of the bill.

CASE has been in conversations in recent weeks with the bill sponsors to share our concerns that the bill would have major negative impacts on school districts. We’re hopeful that significant amendments will be introduced to protect the level of funding districts currently receive and to ease some of the restrictions placed on districts by some components of the bill. The bill has been laid over while these negotiations take place.

We support the belief that evidence-based reading instruction is a critical component of a student’s education and that districts have comprehensive intervention systems in place to identify and support any student reading below grade level; it’s our goal to be able to get Senate Bill 199 to a place where we are able to support it.

**De-brucing legislation passed by House Finance Committee**

Legislation that would lift the state spending restrictions required by TABOR was approved earlier this week by the House Finance Committee. As we have shared with you in previous communications, a pair of bills (House Bill 1257 and 1258) would refer a measure to voters this fall that if approved, would allow the state to keep and spend all revenue collected after June 30, 2018.

Under the constitution, state and local governments are currently required to return all tax dollars that are collected above a certain amount. This threshold is calculated based on a formula of population plus inflation and is known as the Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights (TABOR). If voters approved the measure in November, this cap would effectively be lifted, which policymakers refer to as de-brucing (named after Douglas Bruce, who wrote the TABOR amendment).

The amount of money the state would be able to keep would depend on economic conditions and would be earmarked for three key spending areas: K-12 public education, transportation, and higher education. Because the amount of money that school districts would receive would fluctuate year to year, the legislation specifies that districts could only spend the funds on one-time expenditures—or in the words of CASE Executive Director Lisa Escárcega in her testimony before the House Finance Committee, on things like “books, buses, and boilers.”

Although House Bills 1257 and 1258 would not be a fix for the underfunding of Colorado public schools, it would provide more money for districts that is sorely needed. CASE strongly supports this package of bills and will keep you informed as the legislation moves forward.

Learn more: [Amid broader budget debate, a modest proposal for more Colorado school funding advances](https://www.chalkbeat.org/article/amid-broader-budget-debate-a-moderate-proposal-for-more-colorado-school-funding-advances) *(Chalkbeat, April 1, 2019)*
Bill would ask Colorado voters to end TABOR refunds, send extra money to transportation and education

(Denver Post, March 20, 2019)