

Leveling the Playing Field for Public Charter School Students: SB-187 and SB-188

WHAT THE BILLS DO

- SB-187 would create a clearer and more straightforward framework for charter school operation in Colorado. It streamlines reporting, increases transparency, and enhances quality standards for districts considering charter applications.
- SB-188 requires school districts share local mill levy override dollars equally with charter students in their district and improves equal access to facilities and facilities funds.

PUBLIC CHARTER STUDENTS ARE BEING SHORTCHANGED

- Colorado public charter school student receive eighty cents on the dollar when compared to their peers in traditional public schools. Much of this disparity occurs because school districts are able to withhold locally-raised mill levy funding from public charter school students.
- Equal mill sharing, required by SB-188, ensures that the dollars follow the student and that each public school student receives equal funding within a district.
- Leading school districts like Denver, JeffCo, Boulder, and DougCo already share locally-raised funds equally. These strategies should be replicated across the state.

CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE MAKING A BIG IMPACT IN COLORADO

- In Colorado, charter schools are tuition-free, public schools that are open to all children. They have the flexibility to be innovative, entrepreneurial and self-governing, and are held accountable for student performance.
- Public charter schools have operated in Colorado for over 20 years and currently serve over 108,000 kids in 226 schools across the state. If combined, charter schools would be the largest district in Colorado.
- Importantly, the diversity of students enrolled in charter public schools reflects the diversity of our state. In 2015-16, 46.9% of Colorado charter public school students identified as students of color, compared to 45.7% of the state's traditional public school students.
- Public charter schools are also posting impressive results for kids: In 2014, students in charter public schools were more likely to score proficient or advanced in math, reading and writing on the TCAP than their peers in traditional public schools. This was true across all demographic groups.

SB-187 AND SB-188 WOULD MAKE SEVERAL COMMONSENSE IMPROVEMENTS

- Streamline reporting for top performing schools
- Modernize auditing practices to reflect newly-recognized charter networks
- Increase transparency for district charges to charter schools for services
- Level the playing field for charters who are applying for BEST (Building Excellent Schools Today) facilities grants
- Create a consistent timeline for schools who are applying for exclusive chartering authority
- Build the framework for equal funding for Charter School Institute (CSI) Schools
- Add "maintenance" to the list of allowable charter school capital construction expenses