

COLORADO SUCCEEDS' 2016 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ **Developed a program that rewards schools when students earn in-demand workplace skills and credentials.** One of our priority bills, HB-1289, passed with bipartisan support. It creates an innovative \$2 million incentive program that rewards schools when high school students (1) earn an industry-recognized credential tied to an in-demand job; (2) complete a rigorous workplace training program; or (3) pass the AP Computer Science exam. We rallied the business community and schools in support of this measure.
- ▶ **Expanded opportunity for public charter school students.** We worked closely with partners in the charter sector to drive an aggressive agenda aimed at leveling the playing field for public charter school students. These policy changes cover a variety of technical adjustments, that taken together, will greatly ease unnecessary operating demands currently placed on charter schools while simultaneously improving school quality. They also force districts to treat charters fairly or risk losing control over them, which helps create the conditions necessary for scaling successful charters statewide. See the reverse side for a complete description of this year's landmark legislation.
- ▶ **Rebuffed an aggressive assault on public charter schools.** Status quo defenders launched an aggressive legislative attack against public charter schools. We defeated one particularly egregious bill that sought to require additional paperwork for charter school operators simply to make their life harder. We also used this legislative session as an opportunity to educate legislators and the general public about public charter schools, increasing awareness and urgency to improve funding equity for all students.
- ▶ **Rejected all efforts to weaken standards, eliminate assessments, and rollback accountability.** Despite a landmark testing reduction bill that Colorado Succeeds helped pass last year, several legislators brought bills to weaken school and district accountability. We rallied with our education partners to defeat nearly twenty attempts to weaken Colorado's ability to measure student progress and continuously improve school and district performance. Critically, Colorado will also continue to provide parents with information to compare and choose schools.
- ▶ **Protected key reforms to educator effectiveness and teacher tenure.** Teacher evaluation and tenure reform (SB 10-191) remain intact thanks to a coordinated coalition effort led by Colorado Succeeds to oppose repealing Colorado's recent improvements. We worked with forward-thinking legislators to drive a wedge between extreme members from both parties that initially supported the attacks on tenure reform and school leadership. The result was a resounding defeat that maintains the quality of educator evaluations and protects a principal's basic right to choose the staff who work in their building.

BY THE NUMBERS

26,004

Followers on Colorado Succeeds social media accounts

71

Legislators we met with to discuss our policy priorities

63

Times a business, education, or community organization signed on to support our policy priorities

35

Media stories citing Colorado Succeeds for our expertise and perspective

15

Times Colorado Succeeds members and staff testified

9

Op-eds Colorado Succeeds authored in major print media

5

Editorials in support of our policy priorities

4

Amicus briefs filed at the Colorado Court of Appeals and the Colorado Supreme Court in support of our policy priorities

VICTORIES FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IN 2016

Colorado Succeeds helped develop and pass a series of major policy changes impacting public charter schools. The list below details these victories and explains how they ease operating demands while improving quality and expanding opportunity for public charter school students.



Increased charter schools' access to land and facilities. Districts must notify charter schools on an annual basis of any vacant or underutilized buildings or land in their possession and charters will be allowed to submit proposals to use that space.



Ensured public charter students receive all state and federal money. Districts will be required to distribute all per-pupil state and federal money to charter schools on an equal basis.



Increased transparency of district-provided services to charter schools. Requires districts to provide itemized accounting to their charters for charges related to various central administrative overhead and special education costs.



Ensured equitable funding transfers and improved open meetings requirements for CSI schools. Aligns open meeting laws for Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) charter boards with other school boards. Also, schools transferring between CSI and district authorizers will not see their funding formula change.



Leveled the playing field for charters applying for capital construction grants. Reduces the number of years a charter must be open before being able to apply to the state's BEST capital construction competitive grant program. This makes sure the same rules apply to all schools across the state—traditional and charter.



Improved charter authorizing practices. This ensures districts employ best practices in charter authorizing and expands the grounds that a district can gain or lose its control over opening charter schools. This will help ensure that charter authorizers give charter applications a fair review and encourage them to share resources with charters equally.



Grew the size of the Charter Capital Construction fund and created more flexibility for charter schools to invest those dollars. Increased flexibility gives charters additional access to the charter school capital construction funds and allows them to invest those dollars in maintenance. As a result of our work on the Student Success Act in 2014, the fund grew by \$3 million this year, bringing the total to \$25 million—up from just \$7 million two years ago.



Streamlined regulation and financial reporting. Charter school networks (charters with multiple campuses) will be allowed to complete one financial audit each year that sits over the entire network. No transparency will be lost as networks would still need to complete component unit audits for each individual campus, but unnecessary cost and time requirements will be eliminated.



Reduced paperwork for top-performing schools. Reduction in Uniform Improvement Plan (UIP) reporting requirements from once a year to once every other year in the case of top-rated “performance” schools.