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Colorado lawmakers request changes to school funding formula

Michael Karlik, Colorado Politics Oct 23, 2019 Updated 5 hrs ago



A student raises her hand at DCIS Montbello during a reading assignment in a classroom at the Denver school in May. (Nathan W. Armes, Chalkbeat Colorado)

The Interim Committee on School Finance on Tuesday signaled support for a bill that would better fund the needs of low income, special needs and rural students.

The state's school finance formula, created in 1994, calculates the money Colorado's 178 school districts receive based on their size, cost of living and the number of low-income students. Last year, CPR reported, per pupil reimbursements ranged from \$7,000 to \$16,000.

During the public testimony, witnesses raised the possibility of de-emphasizing district size and cost of living so that student needs could take precedence. The counterargument is that larger and wealthier districts would still need to pay their teachers a living wage to be able to reside in the district.

So far this year, Colorado has seen two teacher strikes — one in Denver and an ongoing strike in Park County centered around low pay and poor investment in classrooms.

"I'm a little concerned by saying we are going to possibly present a bill that says we want to totally remove a couple of the different categories," said Sen. Nancy Todd, D-Aurora.

Any changes will be more difficult without new revenue. The "budget stabilization factor," or the state's deficit in education spending created after the recession, was \$672.4 million this past fiscal year. If passed next month, Proposition CC would bring in just over \$103 million for schools.



Big changes in funding for Colorado rural schools, special education



🔗 School Finance Act may provide break to Colorado's rural schools



Tax windfall will benefit Colorado schools, especially rural ones

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