

October 27, 2016

An Open Letter to State Leaders:

As representatives of statewide and community organizations, we know what our children and communities require to thrive:

- **Vibrant public schools** with qualified, well-prepared and culturally competent teachers for every student regardless of where they live or how they learn;
- **Learning opportunities** that meet the needs and curiosity of each and every child;
- **Individual attention, support and mental health services** that ensure that no child's future is defined by deprivations, challenges, or trauma.

We also know that every year these student needs go unfulfilled is a year that our students cannot replace or redo. The urgency of now could not be greater.

We appreciate that the coming legislative year poses significant challenges for you. Despite having one of the strongest economies in the nation, the Colorado constitution requires that you hold back funds from the fundamental services that help our communities thrive – vibrant public schools, public health and safety, affordable college, safe roads – in order to fund small, individual taxpayer rebates.

Now is the time for us to consider the building blocks necessary to ensure prosperity in the future. Colorado's rapid economic and population growth requires investment in the Coloradans whom we hope will lead, serve, and work in our communities in the decades to come.

Education is the bedrock of our strength as a state. It is in that context that the undersigned organizations call on you to apply the following minimum standards to your consideration of budget and education policy this year. We ask that you:

1. **Place Colorado on a three-year path to restoring total funding**, which will require a 2017-18 budget that does not allow average per pupil funding to fall farther behind inflation.
2. **Reject policies that exacerbate or increase the already existing inequities between districts.** This includes rejecting unfunded mandates.
3. **Reject policies that will pit children against each other.** Address the inequities in learning opportunities to Colorado's children through significant additional resources.
4. **Ensure that the all-too-scarce public dollars allocated to K-12 education are only used for public schools.**

We do not accept – and hope that you will not accept – the notion that adequate and equitable support for school funding is something that is simply beyond your authority or Colorado's ability. Education serves as the foundation of **individual opportunity, community vitality and economic prosperity**. We ask for the children of Colorado and for the future of our great state that our elected leaders be bold, visionary and united in addressing this funding crisis.

Thank you for keeping the future of Colorado in your minds as you propose and consider the state budget.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Teachers-Colorado
The Arc of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties
Colorado Council of Churches
Colorado Education Association
Coloradans for Educational Excellence
Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy and Research Organization
Colorado Parent Teacher Association
Colorado School Finance Project
Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition
Great Education Colorado
NAACP - Denver Branch
Padres Unidos
Project VOYCE
Support Jeffco Kids
Urban League of Metropolitan Denver