To: Colorado Legislative Council Staff
From: Brian Ewert, Superintendent, Littleton Public Schools
       Co-Chair, CASE Legislative Committee
       Grant Schmidt, PhD, Superintendent, Hanover School District 28
       Co-Chair, CASE Legislative Committee
Date: October 2, 2019
RE: Public Comment to the Interim Committee on School Finance

The currently available form that the Committee has published seeking public comment asks, in
part, that respondents sort and rank selected factors and categoricals by need for change or desire
for improvement. We believe this is a flawed and prejudicial approach. To suggest there can be
a priority of improving at-risk funding, for example, over improving special education funding is
unproductive and insensitive to the students these targeted funds support.

Colorado superintendents previously proposed a student-centric school finance formula that
aspires to provide all 178 school districts with increased funding for all students, while at the
same time establishes a more equitable distribution of funding for students who are traditionally
underserved and/or face the greatest challenges in meeting Colorado’s expectations for
postsecondary and workforce readiness. The formula also proposed a different approach,
isolating each factor rather than the complicated multiplicative approach in the current formula.
This approach still represents the views of Colorado’s superintendents and is grounded in quality
research.

Our proposal notwithstanding, the most important component to a new school funding formula is
additional revenue. Without additional revenue, adjustments within the current formula or
implementation of a new formula will inevitably result in creating winners and losers among
districts that are already functioning in a grossly underfunded system.

Colorado superintendents have spoken on our vision for the redesign of the school finance
formula in a proposal that had the support of 174 superintendents across the state and thereby ask
the Interim Committee on School Finance to:

1. Revisit in detail the work of Colorado superintendents as a research-based model for a
   more adequate and equitable formula.

2. Support the notion that additional revenue is a prerequisite to adjusting the current
   formula or implementing a new formula, and that taking resources from one underfunded
   factor or categorical to bolster another underfunded factor or categorical is a poor
   strategy.
3. Review supporting documents attached to this response:
   
a. Data showing progress Colorado has made toward the goals identified by superintendents and the deficits we still face to achieve adequacy and equity as defined by superintendents.

   b. An illustration of the superintendents’ priority that all actions regarding school finance must acknowledge and improve funding in three key areas: adequacy, equity, and opportunity gaps.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments to the Committee. We look forward to the opportunity to work directly with you by sharing our research-based consensus approach to improving the school finance formula.
Where is Colorado after 2019 Legislative Session?
A look at progress toward equitable and more adequate school funding.

Total Per Pupil Funding Differences

National Average Per Pupil Revenue
$12,561

CO Average Per Pupil Revenue for HB17-1232
$9,596

Current CO Average Per Pupil Revenue- NO BS factor
$9,197

Current CO Average Per Pupil Revenue- BS factor
$8,569

Funding Full-day Kindergarten: Prior, Current, and Needed
$357,298,315...

Funding for Preschool: Current versus Needed
$168,512,891

Funding for Students in Poverty: Current versus Needed
$452,925,989

Funding Special Education: Current versus Needed
$195,383,360

Funding ELL Students: Current versus Needed
$22,094,436

Funding for District Size: Current versus Needed
$191,213,034

Funding for Gifted and Talented: Current versus Needed
$9,569,779

Notes:
- Enrollment data from CDE 2019-20
- National comparisons from the US Census Bureau
- Poverty are students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch program
- Colorado revenue is reflective of local property tax, specific ownership tax, and state sales tax and state income tax. Revenue calculations exclude individual district grants and federal dollars
- Budget Stabilization Factor/Negative Factor – a mechanism created by the general assembly to remove dollars beginning in the great recession from K-12. The current dollars owed is $572 million. The cumulative last year to date is $8.1 billion
- HB18-1232 – school finance legislation that was introduced that had the support of over 170 of the school districts in the state – reflecting the principles of adequacy, equity, sustainability and adaptability.
Funding for Capital: Current versus Needed

* Needed dollars are forecasted through FY18 by CDE on Statewide Facility Assessment

**Sources of BEST Grant Funding:
- Marijuana Excise Tax- $40,000,000
- State Land Trust Funds- $56,000,000
- Colorado Lottery Spillover- $1,000,000
- Interest Earned on Assistance Fund- $3,927,599
COLORADO SUPERINTENDENTS' School Finance Legislative Values

COLORADO RANKS LAST IN THE NATION ON PROVIDING TEACHERS A COMPETITIVE WAGE
Teacher compensation vs. professions with similar education

3000 unfilled teaching positions

$95% of Colorado's rural teachers have salaries that do not meet the cost of living in their own community

K-12 Per Pupil Funding

1982 - National Average $232 Above
2015 - National Average $2162 Below

16% reduction in people entering Colorado educator preparation programs between 2013-2017

QUALITY SCHOOL FUNDING MUST CHECK ALL THESE BOXES

ADEQUACY

☑ Adequate school funding includes annual Amendment 23 increases for inflation and pupil growth as well as

☑ Significant buy-down of the Budget Stabilization Factor

EQUITY

☑ An equitable school finance act recognizes the unique learning needs of Each Student

☑ Including students who are impacted or advanced by factors such as Poverty, Disability, English as a Second Language, and Gifted and Talented

☑ Access for all students to Full Day Kindergarten

OPPORTUNITY GAPS

☑ Superintendents understand that there are also issues of district adequacy and equity to be considered

A QUALITY EDUCATION SHOULD NOT DEPEND ON ZIP CODE