



HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 26-1028

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Hamrick and Goldstein, Bacon, Boesenecker, Brown, Camacho, Carter, Duran, Froelich, Gilchrist, Jackson, Joseph, Lieder, Lindsay, Lukens, Martinez, Mauro, McCormick, Nguyen, Paschal, Phillips, Rydin, Sirota, Smith, Stewart K., Story, Titone, Velasco, Zokaie, McCluskie; also SENATOR(S) Kolker, Amabile, Ball, Benavidez, Bridges, Cutter, Danielson, Daugherty, Exum, Gonzales J., Hinrichsen, Jodeh, Kipp, Lindstedt, Marchman, Mullica, Roberts, Snyder, Sullivan, Wallace, Weissman, Coleman.

CONCERNING A COMMITMENT TO PURSUE FULL AND FAIR FUNDING OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

WHEREAS, Public education is the bedrock of our democracy, fundamental to individual opportunity, the underpinning of thriving communities, and the key to Colorado's economic prosperity and future; and

WHEREAS, Maintaining and improving the competitiveness of Colorado and its students requires wise and adequate investment in Colorado's public schools; and

WHEREAS, The return on investment of money invested in Colorado's public schools has long been recognized as among the nation's highest; and

WHEREAS, Increasing high school graduation rates, industry certifications, and completed associate's degrees in Colorado exemplify the effectiveness of Colorado's investment in public schools; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that increased public school funding results in long-term gains in graduation rates and lifetime wages, prevents crime, and lowers incarceration costs; and

WHEREAS, Public school educators and support staff across Colorado make invaluable contributions to their schools, districts, and communities by dedicating their time, talents, and out-of-pocket money to their students, despite Colorado having the largest "teacher pay penalty" in the nation; and

WHEREAS, A 2022 study published in SAGE Open found that when public school teachers receive higher pay, students perform better, leading to improved academic outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Colorado currently funds schools at a level that approximates the state's 1989 per-pupil spending, adjusted for inflation, which does not account for the cost increases school districts face for health care, energy use, and PERA contributions nor for the additional financial demands placed on schools in the past three decades for standards-based education, rapid advances in technology and career technical education, and behavioral health challenges related to COVID, trauma, and social media; and

WHEREAS, In 2023, the general assembly took concrete steps to investigate and address the need for additional school funding resources in light of changes made by the passage of Senate Bill 23-287, which created a Public School Finance Task Force to recommend beneficial changes to the school finance formula and commissioned two "adequacy studies" to assess the amount of additional resources and funding needed to ensure all Colorado students can reach the standards and requirements set by the state; and

WHEREAS, The general assembly passed a supplemental appropriations bill in 2024, dedicating \$3 million to the adequacy studies to ensure they were conducted with the highest standards of rigor, research, and data analysis-of which, Colorado spent \$2 million; and

WHEREAS, In 2024, the Public School Finance Task Force issued a report to the general assembly with recommendations to adjust the school finance formula to improve the equity and adequacy of school funding-some of which were incorporated in House Bill 24-1448 - and suggested that the legislature "annually revisit and update the base and need weights" and that "[u]pdates should reflect the results of the adequacy studies when they have been published"; and

WHEREAS, In January 2025, the legislature received the reports and recommendations of the two commissioned studies: "Equity and Adequacy of Colorado School Funding: A Cost-Modeling Approach" by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and "Colorado Input-Based Financial Adequacy Study Report," by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA); and

WHEREAS, Both studies found that Colorado teacher salaries are too low, and the tax system that supports schools is inequitable and inadequate; and

WHEREAS, The AIR study recommends that the Colorado legislature commit to set funding levels commensurate with Colorado's education goals, increase funding weights for at-risk students to base more resources on student needs, raise teacher pay, hire more teachers, reduce inequity in local taxes, and adjust salaries to account for regional differences in cost of living; and

WHEREAS, The APA study recommends that the state provide a funding base of \$12,346 per student, that small districts continue to receive extra funding, and that the state provide funding to equalize mill levy override funding across districts; and

WHEREAS, According to the APA study, adequate funding would be \$3.5 billion higher than the current level and \$3.1 billion higher than the school funding formula, when fully implemented, created in House Bill 24-1448; and

WHEREAS, Were Colorado funding our schools fully and fairly, as defined by the adequacy studies, every student would have the individual attention they need from teachers, counselors, health professionals, tutors, and support staff to succeed and thrive; every teacher would receive a reasonable workload, professional development and coaching, and a salary that would allow them to live where they work; and every community would enjoy the benefit of vibrant public schools, a high-quality workforce, and an engaged citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Colorado's fiscal constraints, the depletion of the state education fund, and the potential of federal funding cuts to education, Medicaid, school nutrition, human services, and other critical programs

threaten the sustainability and adequacy of public school funding in Colorado; and

WHEREAS, The general assembly has both the opportunity and the responsibility to turn the adequacy study data into a structured, multi-year plan - Colorado's Blueprint for Student Success - to create a Colorado where every child has access to great teachers, individual attention, support services, appropriate technology, and a broad, high-quality education so they can thrive; and

WHEREAS, Failing to make progress toward implementing the adequacy study recommendations would waste the funds used to commission these high-quality studies and break trust with the students who rely on adults to solve difficult problems that fundamentally impact their lives; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-fifth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein:

That we, the members of the Colorado General Assembly:

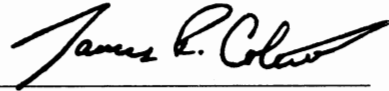
(1) Reaffirm the critical importance of public education and the fair and full funding thereof; and

(2) Declare that it is the intent of the Colorado House of Representatives to honor the \$2 million investment in the adequacy studies made by the taxpayers of Colorado by taking concrete steps to gain an understanding of the findings and recommendations of the studies, choose which study's methodology and recommendations to follow, and develop a multi-year implementation plan, including revenue triggers, to phase in the recommendations.

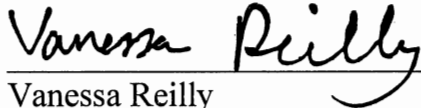
Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to Governor Jared Polis, House Speaker Julie McCluskie, House Majority Leader Monica Duran, House Minority Leader Jarvis Caldwell, Senate President James Coleman, Senate Majority Leader Robert Rodriguez, and Senate Minority Leader Cleave Simpson.



Julie McCluskie
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES



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PRESIDENT OF
THE SENATE



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CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES



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