



SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 09-056

BY SENATOR(S) Romer, Bacon, Boyd, Carroll M., Foster, Gibbs, Groff, Heath, Hodge, Hudak, Isgar, Keller, King K., Morse, Newell, Sandoval, Schwartz, Shaffer B., Spence, Tapia, Tochtrop, Veiga, White;
also REPRESENTATIVE(S) Middleton, Casso, Court, Curry, Ferrandino, Fischer, Frangas, Green, Kefalas, Kerr A., Labuda, Massey, Merrifield, Pommer, Priola, Ryden, Scanlan, Schafer S., Solano, Todd, Vigil, Weissmann, Carroll T.

CONCERNING CONTINUING COLORADO'S SIGNIFICANT ADVANCES IN EDUCATION REFORM THROUGH THE USE OF FEDERAL "RACE TO THE TOP" MONEYS.

WHEREAS, In February of 2009, Congress passed and President Barack Obama signed the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009", Pub.L. 111-5, to provide seven hundred eighty-seven billion dollars in economic stimulus moneys to state governments, including five billion dollars to be distributed by federal Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Duncan has placed over four billion dollars in the "Race to the Top" fund, and announced that he will distribute it to states through a competitive grant process to reward states and school districts that demonstrate significant progress in achieving substantial gains in student achievement and education reform; and

WHEREAS, To be competitive in seeking "Race to the Top" moneys, a state must demonstrate that it is making progress in achieving the following goals:

(1) Achieving equity in teacher distribution to ensure that all students have access to quality teachers;

(2) Establishing a longitudinal data system that enables schools, school districts, and the state to identify and track students' progress from preschool through postsecondary education;

(3) Improving the quality of the academic standards and assessments within the public schools in the state; and

(4) Ensuring supports and, when necessary, corrective actions for low-performing schools; and

WHEREAS, In April of 2007, the Governor issued executive order B 003 07, creating the P-20 Education Coordinating Council that has met since that time to study several aspects of public education from preschool through postsecondary education, including adult basic education programs, general educational development certificate programs, English-as-a-second-language programs, and adult and family literacy programs, and has made several recommendations for legislative and regulatory changes to address a broad spectrum of education reform issues, including but not limited to early childhood education, school-readiness, data sharing, standards and assessments, alignment of high school and postsecondary education, reducing the dropout rate, facilitating the transition from high school to postsecondary education and increasing the number of students who continue into postsecondary education, increasing the number of nontraditional students who enter postsecondary education, improving the recruitment and retention of quality teachers, and improving education accountability; and

WHEREAS, In recent legislative sessions, due in part to recommendations of the P-20 Education Coordinating Council, the General Assembly has enacted several pieces of legislation that have laid the foundation for significant reforms in public education in Colorado, which legislation includes:

(1) House Bill 07-1062, which established an integrated system of early childhood councils throughout the state to improve and sustain the availability, accessibility, capacity, and quality of early childhood services for children and families;

(2) Legislation to expand the Colorado Preschool Program to include funding for full-day kindergarten and, in the 2008 regular legislative

session, additional legislation providing supplemental kindergarten funding through the "Public School Finance Act of 1994", article 54 of title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes, with the goal of ultimately funding full-day kindergarten for all school districts and charter schools;

(3) The "Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act", part 10 of article 7 of title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes, which requires the State Board of Education to adopt, and school districts to adopt and implement, a description of school readiness, revised content standards, and newly aligned assessments and, in collaboration with the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, to adopt a description of postsecondary and workforce readiness to describe what each student in Colorado should know and be able to demonstrate upon graduation from a public high school;

(4) Authorization to create a model by which to longitudinally measure academic growth, pursuant to which the Department of Education has created the Colorado growth model to enable teachers and parents to measure a child's academic growth longitudinally and determine the amount of growth necessary for the child to be proficient in reading, writing, and mathematics within three years or by the tenth grade, whichever is earlier. Recognized by some as the most effective and accurate growth model in the country, Colorado is now on the leading edge among states in measuring student academic growth and in using that data to raise the statewide level of proficiency;

(5) The "Innovation Schools Act of 2008", article 32.5 of title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes, which authorizes public schools and school districts to seek release from school district policies, state regulations, and state statutes to enable them to implement innovations in operating their schools, including innovations in staffing, personnel selection and evaluation, scheduling, and educational programming, with the goal of raising student achievement; and

(6) The "Quality Teachers Act", article 68 of title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes, which created the quality teacher commission to study the feasibility of implementing a teacher identifier and ways in which to ensure a more equitable distribution of quality teachers to public schools throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, During its first regular session, the Sixty-seventh General Assembly is considering several bills that will further advance education reforms in the state, including:

(1) Senate Bill 09-163, concerning the education accountability system, which creates a fully aligned accountability system within Colorado to measure the performance of each school district, the state charter school institute, and each public school in meeting expectations for student achievement, student academic growth, closing the achievement and growth gaps among student groups, and achieving student postsecondary and workforce readiness, including increasing the graduation and completion rates, and to improve achievement in low-performing schools by providing intensive support and significant oversight of interventions;

(2) House Bill 09-1065, concerning the quality teachers commission, and, in connection therewith, creating an educator identifier pilot program, which will create a statewide teacher and principal identifier system to assist in improving teacher and principal preparation and in creating a more equitable distribution of quality teachers to public schools throughout the state;

(3) House Bill 09-1243, concerning measures to raise the graduation rate in public high schools in Colorado, which will create in the Department of Education a new division to focus on student dropout prevention and reengagement and to assist school districts and charter schools in lowering the dropout rate and raising the graduation and completion rates;

(4) House Bill 09-1285, concerning the government data advisory board, and, in connection therewith, creating the education data subcommittee to make recommendations for creation of a statewide comprehensive P-20 education data system, which legislation will bring together state and local education stakeholders to design and recommend the creation of a comprehensive data system by which schools, school districts, the Department of Education, the Department of Higher Education, and institutions of higher education can share information, helping to create a seamless system of preschool to postsecondary public education;

(5) House Bill 09-1319, concerning concurrent enrollment of public high school students in courses offered by institutions of higher education,

which will authorize school districts to collaborate with institutions of higher education and area vocational schools to enroll high school students in postsecondary courses and will create the ASCENT program to assist students in simultaneously graduating with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree or career and technical education certificate; and

(6) Senate Bill 09-282, concerning the merger of the Denver public schools retirement system with the public employees' retirement association, which will authorize the Denver school district to merge its retirement system with the statewide retirement system in which the other school districts in Colorado participate, and will increase the portability of retirement benefits and improve teachers' and administrators' ability to relocate, thereby helping to create a more equitable distribution of quality teachers throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, These combined, bipartisan efforts of the General Assembly, the Governor, the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Higher Education, school districts, the state charter school institute, public schools, and institutions of higher education clearly demonstrate Colorado's commitment to developing high-quality, innovative education reform programs to raise Colorado's education standards, improve the quality of statewide assessments, improve teachers' ability to measure student academic growth, raise the level of school-readiness, raise the graduation rate, improve data-sharing, and improve the ability to match high-performing teachers with needy students; and

WHEREAS, These efforts place Colorado among the top contenders nationwide for the federal "Race to the Top" moneys; now, therefore,

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

(1) That we, the members of the Sixty-seventh General Assembly, assert that Colorado has made significant advances in education reform in the school districts and public schools of the state in recent years and that the joint, bipartisan efforts of the legislative and executive branches, combined with the excellent work of school districts and public schools in the state, have laid a strong foundation for continued improvement in the quality of the state's public education system;

(2) That we strongly support the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor in their efforts to secure for Colorado a significant portion of the federal "Race to the Top" moneys;

(3) That, if Colorado is successful in winning federal "Race to the Top" moneys, we strongly encourage the Governor to direct the moneys toward high-quality, research-based programs to raise the level of student achievement and academic growth in the state, which may include:

(a) Programs that are designed to achieve equity in teacher distribution in the public schools of the state so that the most experienced and qualified teachers in the state are teaching the most needy students, which programs may include incentives to encourage the best teachers to work in the state's most difficult classrooms;

(b) Creation of a comprehensive, statewide, state-of-the-art data collection and reporting system to enable the public schools, school districts, the state charter school institute, and the state to fully implement and make the most effective use of student and teacher identifiers and to most effectively measure the performance of schools, school districts, and the state charter school institute and to provide useful information to parents to help them help their children;

(c) Incentives, rewards, and technical assistance to encourage those public schools that, although their student populations include a large percentage of at-risk students, are making significant advances in student achievement, student academic growth, closing the achievement gaps, and raising the level of postsecondary and workforce readiness, including raising the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate among high school students;

(d) Continued expansion of the availability of high-quality early childhood education programs, including preschool and full-day kindergarten, so that every child comes to first grade ready to fully participate and learn in the classroom;

(e) Four-year scholarships to attend public or private institutions of higher education in Colorado awarded to at-risk students who demonstrate exemplary achievement of postsecondary and workforce readiness;

(f) Residential schools for students who are at risk of academic failure that will provide them with the academic and social supports, including health care and mental health care, that they need to reach their full academic potential;

(g) Incentives for public schools and school districts to significantly increase the amount of teacher-student contact time by increasing the length of the school day, the school week, and the school year;

(h) Assistance to public schools and school districts to enable them to offer a greater range of advanced academic courses, including advanced placement courses, international baccalaureate programs, and concurrent enrollment postsecondary courses, which assistance may include money for educator professional development, incentives for teachers who teach these courses, support for public schools and school districts to be able to offer these courses, and support for students to pay the fees associated with these courses;

(i) Incentives for national-board-certified educators, including those who teach in high-needs schools, and support for educators who seek national board certification to pay for the fees associated with obtaining the certification;

(j) Innovative programs that enable teachers to interpret data concerning student progress and to differentiate instruction based on ongoing data concerning student-specific strengths and needs;

(k) Identifying as early as possible those students who are at risk of dropping out of high school in order to promote completion of high school, to reengage students who are at risk of not completing high school, and to promote multiple pathways for high school completion;

(l) Strategies to turn around public schools and improve performance in struggling public schools, including improving school performance evaluation systems and increasing the opportunities for public schools to innovate with research-proven strategies;

(m) Strategies to ensure transparency in measuring and reporting school performance, including measures of student academic growth and preparedness for successful entry into the workforce and postsecondary

education;

(n) Revising and funding the elements of the "Public School Finance Act of 1994", article 54 of title 22, Colorado Revised Statutes, to promote, support, and reward student achievement; and

(o) Family literacy education programs for parents and their children to raise the level of student performance in low-performing schools; and

(4) That we are confident that Colorado will be successful in competing for the federal "Race to the Top" moneys and we look forward to continuing our joint efforts with the Governor, the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, the Executive Director of the Department of Higher Education, Colorado's school districts, the state charter school institute, the public schools and institutions of higher education in the state, and the students and parents in those public schools and institutions to meet the challenge of creating and sustaining a public education system that empowers Colorado's citizens to successfully compete with the most capable and highly educated persons in the world.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to President Barack Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, Jr., Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, each member of the Colorado Congressional Delegation, Governor Bill Ritter, Jr., the State Board of Education, and the

Colorado Commission on Higher Education and to the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Association of School Executives, and the Colorado Education Association, with the request that they distribute this Joint Resolution to the members of their respective organizations.

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