

Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. R26-0839.01 Jake Drukman x2291

HJR26-1028

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Hamrick and Goldstein,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

House Committees

Senate Committees

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 26-1028

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

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

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

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

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 WHEREAS, Were Colorado funding our schools fully and fairly,
32 as defined by the adequacy studies, every student would have the
33 individual attention they need from teachers, counselors, health
34 professionals, tutors, and support staff to succeed and thrive; every
35 teacher would receive a reasonable workload, professional development
36 and coaching, and a salary that would allow them to live where they

1 work; and every community would enjoy the benefit of vibrant public
2 schools, a high-quality workforce, and an engaged citizenry; and

3 WHEREAS, Colorado's fiscal constraints, the depletion of the
4 state education fund, and the potential of federal funding cuts to
5 education, Medicaid, school nutrition, human services, and other critical
6 programs threaten the sustainability and adequacy of public school
7 funding in Colorado; and

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

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

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

21 That we, the members of the Colorado General Assembly:

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

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

31 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent
32 to Governor Jared Polis, House Speaker Julie McCluskie, House Majority

1 Leader Monica Duran, House Minority Leader Jarvis Caldwell, Senate
2 President James Coleman, Senate Majority Leader Robert Rodriguez, and
3 Senate Minority Leader Cleave Simpson.