

House Education Committee
State House of Representatives
State Capitol Building
200 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing you today in my role as Past President of the Colorado Student Media Association (CSMA), coordinator for Scholastic Journalism at the national Journalism Education Association (JEA), and journalism teacher and student media adviser at Regis Jesuit High School in Aurora, Colorado, to ask for your support for HB20-1062.

The Colorado Student Free Expression law, CRS 22-1-120 has served as a smart and necessary guide for Colorado student journalists for 30 years. The passage of HB20-1062 will provide necessary updates including language to reflect the evolution of new publication platforms and professional protection to advisers who face retribution for supporting their students' First Amendment rights.

I served as Advocacy Coordinator during my first two terms on the CSMA board, and I had the privilege of working with Colorado teachers, students, and administrators across the state –from Windsor to Delta, and from Denver to Colorado Springs – when issues arose involving student press freedom and administrative censorship. In most cases I found that once students, teachers, and administrators came together to be informed about and acknowledge the educational value of student press freedom and recognize the solid pedagogical approach to allowing for an open forum for student free expression, what resulted were some of the finest moments I have seen in education. However, sometimes advisers faced consequences for their students work including being moved to a different position, self-censorship, poor evaluations, or losing a job.

Although I teach at a private high school, I am proud to say that my school officials have adopted student media policies that are strikingly similar to the Colorado Student Free Expression Law (read: much of it copied and pasted) because they understand that when we give students a voice and give them the responsibility to learn by doing real world work as student journalists, everybody wins. Student journalism is project-based learning, it's 21st century skills practice, it's authentic assessment and innovation. Student journalists are learning to use high standards of English and journalism, seeking the truth and reporting it, minimizing harm, being accountable, transparent and independent, and engaging in critical thinking skills and legal ethical decision-making for real world platforms.

Passage of HB20-1062 will acknowledge the new platforms that students are using to be effective citizens and communicators in the 21st century and protect advisers from retribution for their students' work by providing the protection advisers in other states already enjoy.

The passage of HB20-1062 is critical to complete what the original law successfully began. I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of HB20-1062.

Sincerely,



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Past President, Colorado Student Media Assn.
SJW Coordinator, JEA Journalism Education Assn.
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