



March 17, 2021

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

The Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) Advisory Board is writing in full support of SB21-179, "Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative Advisory Board". Per Section 23-3.3-1001 et seq. C.R.S., the advisory board members currently consist of the executive committee of the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), and three governor-appointed members with an education focus. SB21-179 would add members from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and student voices to the board, with a reduction in membership from CWDC.

As a board, we consider funding requests from institutions of higher education throughout the state. Appointed board members are familiar with the various approaches to student success, academic persistence, and workforce development best practices that, when coupled with tuition assistance programs, ensure students succeed in their post-secondary careers. We are advocates for the program and assist with fundraising and community outreach.

We understand that COSI is administered by the Department of Higher Education, which is overseen by the Commission. The Commission's master plan, *Colorado Rises*, has the goal of 66% postsecondary statewide attainment for Coloradans aged 25 to 34 by the year 2025. The board believes that COSI is a proven, successful strategy for all goals outlined in the master plan to reach the goal of 66%: 1) increase credential completion, 2) erase equity gaps, 3) improve student success and 4) invest in affordability and innovation. Recognizing this, the board is excited about a partnership between CWDC and CCHE to expand CCHE's role in advocating for COSI through participation on the advisory board.

Furthermore, we welcome the addition of two student representative on the board, 1) one COSI alumni or student currently enrolled in a two-year public institution of higher education in and 2) one COSI alumni or student currently enrolled in a four-year public institution of higher education. Student voice is extremely important to the board as we envision how COSI can support all Coloradans seeking a postsecondary credential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tim Fry', written over a horizontal line.

Chairman Tim Fry, COSI Advisory Board  
on behalf of the COSI Advisory Board



# COLORADO

Department of  
Higher Education

Legislative Fact Sheet

3/26/2021

SB21-179 Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative Advisory Board  
*sponsored by Senators Zenzinger and Kirkmeyer & Representatives Kipp and Lynch*  
This bill proposal makes statutory changes to the composition of the COSI Advisory Board to include members of the Colorado Commission of Higher Education (CCHE) and students.



COSI is a proven strategy to help CCHE meet the attainment goal of *Colorado Rises*, but CCHE is not involved with COSI under the current structure of the advisory board.



Change the membership of the COSI board to include CCHE, as appointed by the executive director of CDHE, and include student voice.



With Commission involvement, the Department believes COSI will expand its impact on postsecondary completion, address affordability, and connect job seekers with opportunities to keep Colorado working.

## Background

Per Section 23-3.3-1001 et seq. C.R.S., the advisory board members currently consist of the executive committee of the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), and three governor-appointed members with an education focus. The Department of Higher Education (CDHE) believes that boards and commissions should reflect the composition of grantees. To achieve this, CDHE recommends the General Assembly add representation from higher education, including students to the board. This change in structure will create more alignment between COSI and the CCHE master plan strategic goals outlined in Colorado Rises. CDHE recommends offsetting additions to the board with a reduction in membership from CWDC.

## What is COSI?

COSI is a scholarship program for eligible post-secondary students administered by CDHE. The program grows community efforts and engages private donors to increase available scholarships well beyond the investment from the state. By reaching students from a range of socio-economic classes (0-250% Pell-eligible), COSI students can not only afford a degree but also access the support they need to persist and graduate through the wraparound support services included in the program. Annually, CDHE administers approximately \$10 million from the General Fund.

## Key Statutory Provisions

Amend CRS Section 23-3.3-1001 to include the following new composition of the board:

- Four members appointed by the executive director of the CDLE from the CWDC
- Four members appointed by the executive director of the CDHE from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, commissioners, or advisors
- Seven appointed in partnership between the Executive Directors of CDLE and CDHE
  - One person representing workforce centers
  - One person representing economic development corporations
  - One COSI alumni or student currently enrolled in a two-year public institution of higher education in Colorado
  - One COSI alumni or student currently enrolled in a four-year public institution of higher education in Colorado
  - One person representing the four-year research institutions of higher education\*
  - One person representing the system of four-year postsecondary institutions in the state\*
  - One person representing the community colleges and area vocational districts of the state\*

\* existing statutory language

Meets all strategic goals of *Colorado Rises* to

**Reach 66% credential attainment by 2025**

### For More Information

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Colorado Department of Higher Education <https://highered.colorado.gov/>

Colorado Rises: Advancing Education and Talent Development <http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/>

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