

## Attachment A

House Education

05/19/2021 Upon Adjournment

SB21-232

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Lee Wheeler-Berliner  For  Colorado Workforce Development Council	The Colorado Workforce Development Council supports SB21-232 as a strong opportunity to increase opportunities for education and to support Coloradans to complete college degrees. During the COVID-19 pandemic individuals with 4-year degrees have experienced far less unemployment than those with only a high school diploma. The CWDC works across the spectrum of education and training opportunities and supports the work COSI throughout Colorado. I ask for your support of this bill today.



Dr. Michael J. Thomas, Superintendent

**Glenn E. Gustafson, CPA**  
Deputy Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer  
1115 N. El Paso Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
Phone: (719) 520-2010  
FAX: (719) 633-9347  
E-mail: [glenn.gustafson@d11.org](mailto:glenn.gustafson@d11.org)

May 19, 2021

## Honorable Education Committee:

### 1. Introduction and thanks!

- a. Glenn Gustafson, CPA – Chief Financial Officer - Colorado Springs School District 11
- b. Thank you so much for the recent introduction of a School Finance Act (SFA) that substantially restores funding to K12 Education
- c. This has been such a difficult year with so many impacts on staff and students that funding is essential to restoring normalcy and allow focus on our primary mission of improving student achievement

### 2. FY 20/21 Budget

- a. As a reminder, the FY 20/21 Budget Process was so difficult for K12 across Colorado
- b. Not only did the FY 20/21 SFA come very late in the session (for understandable reasons) but it significantly reduced funding to school districts. D11's share of those reductions was over 5% and \$17 million. These reductions forced the following budget changes:
  - i. Reductions in staff
  - ii. Reduced compensation in the form of furlough days
  - iii. Academic Program Reductions
  - iv. Reduced funding to schools
- c. In summary, while Federal Stimulus funding backfilled some components of the budget, School Districts were forced to make recurring reductions in many areas that had a direct result on students during a very vulnerable time

### 3. FY 21/22 School Finance Act & Budget

- a. Thank you SO much for restoring K12 funding by significantly buying down the Negative Factor
  - i. These funds will allow for the following:
    1. Termination of furlough days
    2. Restoration of student programs and events
    3. Critical funding for mandated expenditures like:
      - a. Healthcare Increases
      - b. Utilities increases related to the "big Freeze" of 2021
      - c. Inflationary increases in contracts across the board but especially construction and facility costs
    4. Innovative programs to improve student achievement and address pandemic consequences
  - ii. Please consider the following as you proceed:

Inspire every mind.

1. We need adoption of the FY 21/22 SFA quickly so we can:
  - a. Finalize employee compensations discussions
  - b. Finalize our Proposed Budgets for the School Board prior to the Board of Education summer recess
2. We need this funding to be recurring and sustainable
  - a. With much of our budget (over 80%) going to compensation, we need to be able to sustain the compensation increases
  - b. We can't afford to go back and forth with academic programs which lead to student and staff disruption
- iii. We appreciate tweaks to the SFA that address major deficiencies in the 1994 SFA
  1. At-Risk & ELL funding is critical to closing achievement gaps
  2. Special Education funding is critical for such an underfunded area that is seeing dramatic increases in SPED identification

**4. ER-BOCES Section of the SFA**

- a. Thank you for allowing a moratorium on new schools approved by the ER-BOCES
- b. There is already one school in existence (D11) and 2 more in the hopper (Woodland Park & Pueblo)
- c. ER-BOCES schools bypass many of the accountability steps currently in place for traditional and charter schools
- d. The State needs an opportunity and the time to address critical logistical elements of the approval, oversight and accountability of a BOCES school

**5. Thank you for your time and dedication in support of K12 Education in Colorado!**

Good afternoon,

My name is Karen Slater and I represent the Colorado School Counselor Association (CSCA). I want to thank Representatives McLachlan and McCluskie for their work on this legislation and realizing the importance of increasing school counselors in our public schools through the Colorado School Counselor Corps Grant (Counselor Corp) program. The goals of the grant are to increase the Graduation Rates, increase post-secondary matriculation, decrease the dropout rates, remediation rates, and improve the School Counselor to Student ratio. Since this program was created the data has shown that we have higher graduation rates, higher completion rates, higher FAFSA completion rates, and lower dropout rates. This success has increased postsecondary readiness to the most at-risk students, provided the framework for successful transitions and has served to better prepare students for the expectations as they move through their academic career.

The Counselor Corp is a four-year grant cycle that has touched almost every corner of the state. Part of the requirements of the program is that the counselor funded through the grant program be retained after the grant expires. The data collected on the program is shared annually with the Legislature.

While the need for additional school counselors was high prior to the pandemic, the need has only increased and the support needed has grown exponentially. By adding \$2M to this program, approximately an additional 25 grants can be awarded.

School counseling isn't just about advising a student of what classes to take; it's helping students to build relationships to foster academic success, develop social-emotional skills that include empathy, self-regulation, and develop post-secondary readiness for the world of work.

When districts have to make tough budget choices, a school counselor is often seen as the most 'expendable' when in fact we are one of the few educators in the building that interacts with the greatest number of students.

Counselor Corp grantees have responded to students in need by meeting students exactly where they are. This year alone during the pandemic:

- We tutored parents on how to help their student with the process of remote learning;
- We worked with families that needed their older children to take care of and oversee remote learning of their siblings as well as attend high school full-time;
- We assisted students with finding jobs to help contribute to the family income during this unprecedented time of high unemployment;
- We provided lunches, weekend meals and Thanksgiving and Christmas meals to families who would have been without food;
- And we assisted students who experienced a loss due to COVID, suicide, fatal accidents, and health issues, by offering them a place to process their grief and provide community mental health resource options.

Our job as school counselors is to support and nurture students. We do it well, and we do it each and every day. We also put our lives at risk for these students during school lockdowns and we pick up the pieces when tragedy strikes in life. I ask that you vote YES on SB21-268 because it will help even more students as they try to navigate their way through the next phase of their life.