

Testimony of Kelley Rice on Behalf of Herself
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 17-1201
SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING MATH DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENT
Before the State House of Representatives, Education Committee
March 15, 2017

Madam Chair Petterson and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Kelley Rice and I am here today to support House Bill 17-1201. I live in Kremmling, Colorado where I am a part of a 5th generation ranching family. I graduated from West Grand High School and went on to college where I got a B.A. in Business Administration. After starting a family, we moved back to Kremmling to raise our kids. I manage a ranch in the area and my husband is a Software Engineer. Although he does have to occasionally travel for work, it provides us the opportunity to have the lifestyle, community and environment we desire for our kids.

Since my children were little, I thought they could conquer and achieve anything they put their minds to. It seems my daughter is proving me right. I say often what an inspiration she is to me. Since the time she could talk she didn't stop asking questions, wanting to know more about the world around her. She is now in 7th grade and her persistence and desire to learn still stands out. I have teachers tell me often that they enjoy her in class, but she sure keeps them on their toes. I believe it as I have experienced the intensity she has to fully understand information and is not satisfied by simply getting the right answer. This relentless passion is why I was excited to learn about HB 17-1201 and why I am here to support it today.

The STEM Diploma Endorsement will benefit my daughter and others like her because it will distinguish her from other students by giving her the opportunity to demonstrate that she has mastery of the material and can apply it across subjects and through life. This would also give her defined milestones as she works her way through school that will keep her focused on the desired path and open up doors for her in college and beyond. Although not entirely sure about her ultimate career choice she has discovered that she is sure about 3 things: her love for animals, her aptitude for math and science and her desire to live in the mountains. I believe a STEM endorsement on her diploma will help her achieve those life and lifestyle goals in an efficient and financially responsible way by preparing her for the jobs of the future, setting her level of effort and abilities apart, and ensuring colleges she is ready to keep moving at full throttle.

The capstone project suggested in this Bill will be a large part of the preparation and the distinguishing factor. I had the opportunity to serve on a judging panel for the 8th grade exit interviews in our district. I enjoyed the process and opportunity it created for the kids to demonstrate what they had learned. Through that process, it became clear to me that this provided an indicator of subject mastery that grades or testing alone could not. This is an important distinction that colleges and future employers would like to see. Although much more rigorous I believe the capstone project outlined in this Bill will serve that purpose for this endorsement.

The first question that came to my mind when hearing about this bill was, “what is the school’s responsibility and what is the student’s responsibility?” To my delight, it appears that a good portion of the weight necessary for success in achieving this endorsement lands squarely on the shoulders of the student. The wisdom of this is crucial in nurturing students to have character qualities that colleges and employers are seeking. I am not an educator, but it seems to me that by encouraging students to be responsible for what they are getting out of the education process instead of relying solely on what teachers are contributing makes both more successful.

I am thrilled that instead of the student being restricted or held back by things outside of their control the premise of this Bill encourages students to take ownership and do what is necessary to achieve the endorsement within their own set of circumstances. This fosters students that truly want to make this their reality and who will passionately urge the involvement of their support groups (parents, family, friends) and all necessary stakeholders (school, community, industry leaders) to make this happen. I think the stakeholders and their support groups will find that their passion is contagious and we will gladly step up to our role to help them achieve it. What a wonderful way for them to be rewarded based on the amount of effort they put into their education.

I understand that there is a sentiment out there that this rigorous program may be difficult for rural schools to accomplish. The purpose of this Bill is meant to challenge, it is not meant for everyone, it is meant to make kids and their support groups think outside of the box and it is meant for kids like my daughter whether she is in a rural school or a large one. That is the beauty of this Bill. Let the individual school and the students determine their limitations and let’s not make assumptions about their capabilities.

I thank you for your time and your consideration of this Bill.

Sincerely,

Kelley Rice