

Colorado League of Charter Schools

2025 Legislative Debrief

Political Context

House: 43-22

Senate: 23-12

New Members: 22

House Education: 8-5

Senate Education: 4-3

State Budget

NEWS: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Colorado's budget hole is now \$1.2 billion, as Medicaid costs continue to climb

The rise in Medicaid costs, which have continued unabated since last spring, remain the single biggest driver of the state's budget woes

Take-home Message: The budget appears to be on an unsustainable path. Without significant *ongoing* actions to reduce obligations and/or make additional revenues available, the State would exhaust the 15.0 percent General Fund reserve before FY 2029-30, even without a recession. The recession scenarios only accelerate the depletion of the reserve. Sustaining a viable reserve will require structural change to revenues and/or obligations.

Polis, state lawmakers negotiating alternative school funding plan after backlash from education leaders

Colorado House Speaker Julie McCluskie's plan would cut \$50 million instead of \$150 million

Summary of Successes - 2025

1. PRESERVED OR ADVANCED

**charter funding across
all major revenue streams**

2. VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED

against anti-charter legislation

3. PROTECTED CHARTER

AUTONOMY and flexibility

1. Preserved or Advanced Charter Funding

\$500M

Increasing Per-Pupil Funding: The League supported HB25-1320 and the phasing in of the new formula. This will invest more than \$500 million in additional funding to K-12. Next year, this means an average per-pupil funding increase of 3.6%.

\$250M

Increasing the Moral Obligation Cap: The League successfully advocated to increase the cap on the Moral Obligation Program by \$250 million, bringing the total to \$1 billion.

\$5M

Increasing CSI Equalization Funding: The state budget fully funds the CSI Mill Levy Equalization Fund, in large part because of the League's advocacy in a budget where there was a \$1.2 billion shortfall, we increased CSI mill levy equalization by over \$5 million.

1. Preserved or Advanced Charter Funding

\$7M

At-Risk Supplemental: The at-risk supplemental funding, which impacts dozens of charter schools across the state, was eliminated by the committee that writes the budget. The League successfully advocated for an amendment to the School Finance Act that will restore the entire \$7 million next year.

\$ Savings

PERA True Up: HB 25-1105 reduces DPS' employer contribution rate by 3% to align with PERA. This change will save charter schools hundreds of thousands of dollars in Denver.

1. Preserved or Advanced Charter Funding

GRANT PRIORITY

Strengthening Alternative Education Campuses: We drafted HB 25-1167 to strengthen Alternative Education Campuses, ensuring these schools are prioritized for grants from the Colorado Department of Education.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING for charter school staff

Investing in Educator Housing Assistance: SB25-167 directs the State Treasurer to create a new “Community Investment Portfolio” to help fund affordable housing. Part of this will support down payment assistance and housing projects for public school staff — including those in charter schools.

2. Vigorously defended against anti-charter legislation

- **NO** broad anti-charter legislation **WAS EVEN DRAFTED**
- **BLOCKED A PROPOSAL** to hand the state legislature sweeping control over CSI decisions.
- **DEFEATED** a Tax Credit Bill that excluded many charter school teachers

3. Protected charter autonomy and flexibility

- We took the first step in **REDUCING BURDENSOME REQUIREMENTS** and regulations by reforming the UIP process through 25-1210.
- **AMENDED OR HELPED KILL BILLS** that encroached upon charter autonomy (Cell Phone: HB 25-1135, Library Resources: 25-063, Dress Code: 25-1312, Financial Transparency: 25-153, Financial Literacy: 25-1192)

Ending Education Deserts

NEWS: EDUCATION

Colorado charters could open without school board approval in low-performing areas under proposal

Gov. Jared Polis, a charter advocate, signaled his support for the bill concept Thursday, saying “we need the moral courage to say enough is enough”

Other Bills of Note

- **SB-063:** Library Resource Decision Standards for Public Schools
- **SB 25-200:** Dyslexia Screening and READ Act Requirements
- **HB 25-1278:** Education Accountability System
- **HB 25-1312:** Legal Protection for Transgender Individuals

Next Steps

- **ONE-PAGERS** for how the policy impacts your schools
- **MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS** on legislative agenda for 2026
- **CHARTER FUNDING FIX** and Supreme Court ruling
- **FEEDBACK** on 2025 Legislative Session communications?

Questions, Comments, Concerns?

Reach out to us!

advocacy@clcsaction.org