40,000+ Emails Attest to the Damaging Impacts HB1363 Would Have on Students and Families across Colorado

March 25, 2024

Introduced on March 6th, Colorado House Bill 24-1363 – sponsored by Representative Lorena Garcia, Representative Tammy Story, and Senator Lisa Cutter – takes unnecessary aim at students benefiting from Colorado's effective and impactful public charter school system. Regardless of zip code or background, all children in our state deserve access to high-quality public school options. HB24-1363 would undermine the innovation, diversity, and opportunities that charter schools bring to Colorado's educational landscape. It focuses on politics and partisanship over the needs of tens of thousands of Colorado students and families.

Colorado charter schools and the organizations supporting this statement center their work on what is in the best interest of children, and HB1363 would have a decidedly negative impact on these very children and their families.

Over 40,000 emails have been sent to legislators from individuals across the state who have benefited from public charter schools, asking them not to allow HB1363 to advance. This speaks not only to the value charter schools have brought to our public education system but also to the significant ways HB1363 would negatively impact our state's 260+ charter schools and the more than 135,000 students they serve.

At over 50 pages in length, HB1363 seeks to extensively restructure well-functioning components of our state's proven and balanced public charter school system:

- Without consideration of the quality and academic outcomes of a school, HB1363 would allow districts to close charter schools that families have actively chosen as the right option for their children.
- HB1363 eliminates cornerstone operational flexibilities that have enabled charter schools and their students to thrive – flexibilities that public charter schools rely on to better serve some of our state's most marginalized students and communities.
- By substantially narrowing the path for charter schools to grow and be renewed, HB1363 threatens the educational choices made by over 15% of the students in Colorado's schools.

Our collective organizations – representative of the bipartisan support that has long been a hallmark of charter schools in Colorado – deeply understand the indispensable role that public charter schools play. They are critical to the overall public school ecosystem in Colorado and profoundly impactful for the students, families, and communities they serve in nearly every legislative district in our state.

In the words of public charter school students and families:

"My school is about doing what's best for the community. This bill is harmful to our students who are mainly minorities, low-income, and rely heavily on the resources that my school has to offer." – Jemal Adbi, Rocky Mountain Prep - Fletcher parent.

"My school isn't about politics - it's about creating strong, passionate, and diverse leaders." – Nashi Mason, GALS student.

"My charter school is about providing the best educational opportunities for students to thrive. My school needs policies that help families, teachers, and students combat systemic issues for success in academics. They work to elevate the voices of parents with collaborative activities of action and awareness to create change. In the end, parents, students, and educators in my community work together to address oppressive systems that hinder students and families from achieving success beyond statistics or stereotypes." – Larry Thomas, Colorado Early Colleges - Aurora parent.

Our priority is students and parents such as Jemal, Nashi, and Larry. We are asking that the bill sponsors and members of the House Education Committee also make students the focus rather than trying to jeopardize the autonomy, diversity, and innovation that make Colorado's public charter schools some of the best in the nation.