



Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026
Denver Marriott Tech Center



PRESENTED BY

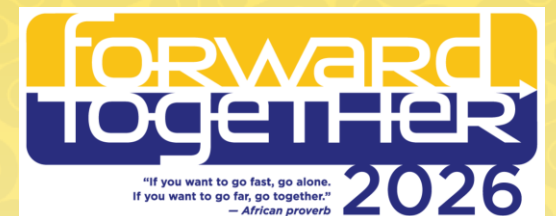


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The 2026 Legislative Session: What's Ahead for Colorado's Public Charter Schools

Prateek Dutta, VP Policy
CLCS Action

Aspen Amphitheater
February 26, 2026 | 8:30-9:30
Advocacy & Policy



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Colorado League of
Charter Schools



We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



Be a part of the action.





Agenda

TIME	TOPIC
8:30-8:40 am	Welcome
8:40-8:50 am	Political Context and Budget
8:50-9:00 am	Proactive Policy
9:00-9:10 am	Bills We Are Monitoring
9:10-9:25 am	Key Topics – SGOs and Funding
9:25-9:30 am	Close



Political Context

House: 43-22

Senate: 23-12

House Education: 8-5

Senate Education: 4-3

A top Democrat in the Colorado Senate is resigning to take nonprofit job, citing legislative pay

Senate President Pro Tempore Dafna Michaelson Jenet of Commerce City, who spent nearly a decade at the Capitol fighting for sexual assault survivors and to improve mental health care, said serving in the legislature has become a financial hardship for her family



Political Context

- Governor Jared Polis, Speaker McCluskie, and Majority Leader Rodriguez are termed out after this year. Senate Minority leader Paul Lundeen and Minority Leader Rose Pugliese resigned past summer. Senator Dafna Michaelson Jenet just resigned last week.
- 2026 is an election year with a record number of primaries and elected officials running for higher office.
- Much like we are seeing across the country, there are large fissures emerging between “moderate” and more “progressive” Dems.
- Another \$850 million dollar projected shortfall this year. Governor’s budget proposal has a lot of unanswered questions. **Structural, not cyclical.**



**We are in the
middle of a fiscal
crisis – and there
are no easy
answers**

NEWS: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Colorado lawmakers return to Capitol facing \$850 million mountain of tough budget decisions

The shortfall means two major things: The General Assembly will have to make funding cuts and it also has no money available to spend on new programs. Those two realities will shape the legislature's entire 120-day lawmaking term.



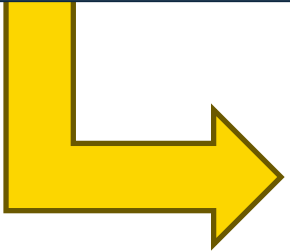


Joint Budget Committee Staff

Nonpartisan Budget Analysis for Colorado's Legislature

Memorandum

To: Joint Budget Committee Members
From: Craig Harper, JBC Staff (303-866-3481)
Date: February 20, 2026
Subject: Budget Stress Test as of February 2026



If feasible, the proposed one-time changes would help with the gap for FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27 but not the underlying structural issues. Similar to the stress test presented in [February 2025](#), this year's modelling shows the State spending down the reserve each year, with the reserve completely depleted by the end of FY 2029-30 under the "baseline" scenario.

Addressing the ongoing shortfall will require significant structural change to expenditures, revenues, or both. Given the scale of the deficit, closing the gap by reducing expenditures would require *ongoing* reductions equating to hundreds of millions of dollars per year. The Governor's request for FY 2026-27 focuses on Medicaid appropriations in the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing. Staff agrees that constraining the growth in Medicaid will be a necessary component. However, staff's analysis indicates that closing the gap will almost certainly require significant reductions to other "big six" departments with large General Fund appropriations.



Budget issues to look for

The Governor and leaders of both political parties want to increase and protect K-12 Funding. But K-12 makes up a large portion of the Budget. Can K-12 be protected while finding cuts everywhere else?

Potential “Cuts” to Education being contemplated:

Homeschool
Enrichment
Programs

Specific
Ownership Tax

Two-Year
Averaging

Eliminating
Categorical
Programs

CSI Mill Levy
Equalization



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8:30-8:40 am	Welcome
8:40-9:00 am	Political Context and Budget
9:00-9:10 am	Proactive Policy
9:10-9:15 am	Bills We Are Monitoring
9:15-9:28 am	Key Topics – SGOs and Funding
9:28-9:30 am	Close



Proactive Policy

Equitable Bond Access: Legislation to improve the proportion of local bond dollars received by charter schools.

Regulatory Relief: Legislation that would cut back on rules and regulations that take up time but make little impact on student outcomes.

Funding Equity: Ensuring charter schools are funded fairly under the new funding formula

Accountable Authorizing

Defense: Protecting hard earned victories over the past few years



Equitable Bond Access

We commissioned a study that revealed significant inequities in charter school access to local bond facility funding.

Between 2015 – 2024, Colorado public school – both district run and charter schools – benefitted from a total of \$17.2 billion in public sources for facilities (Bonds, BEST, Charter Capital Construction, etc)

District Bond Money was the largest amount at \$15.5 billion – 90% of all facilities funding.

Charters received 3.6% of district bond revenue.



Regulatory Relief

Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

DRAFT
2/20/26

DRAFT

LLS NO. 26-0667.01 Ken Fowler x2372

HOUSE BILL

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(None),

BILL TOPIC: Reducing Regulatory Burden on Education Providers
DEADLINES: File by: 2/20/2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING REDUCTION OF REGULATORY BURDENS ON LOCAL**
102 **EDUCATION PROVIDERS.**

Bill Summary



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Bills we are monitoring

- SB-103: At-Risk Public School Program and Public School Accountability
- SB-068: Modify Administration of Education Assessments
- SB-1141: Discriminatory Practices in Public Schools
- HB 26-1292: Scholarship Granting Organizations
- HB-1048: Back to School Sales Tax Holiday
- HB 26-1028: Second Language Education Program for High School Students



Other Key Topics

Charter School Funding

Scholarship Granting Organizations

K-12 Ballot Measure



QUESTIONS?



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helps us all
move forward
together**



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**



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