



2026 Town Hall

Successes and School Finance



Colorado League of
Charter Schools

May 15, 2026



March Town Hall

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Agenda

- Speaker McCluskie
- Legislative Session Recap
- School Finance Act
- Successes



Dan Schaller

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Representative Julie McCluskie

Speaker of the House



Colorado Legislative Composition — 2026

Democrat near supermajority continues to shape the policy environment

House

43 – 22

Democrat majority

Senate

23 – 12

Democrat majority

House Education

8 – 5

Democrat majority

Senate Education

4 – 3

Democrat Majority

01 Budget

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



Colorado League of
Charter Schools

01

Colorado FY2026 — Fiscal Landscape & Education Implications



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.



January
2026

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Lawmakers finish drafting Colorado's budget with final round of major cuts to address roughly \$1.5 billion shortfall

Medicaid took the brunt of the final reductions, include a reimbursement rate cut for providers and a cap on Cover All Coloradans, which provides health care to immigrants who are children or pregnant



May
2026

02 Proactive — Policy

Our legislative offense — priority initiatives and bills we drove



2026 Legislative Agenda

The Colorado League of Charter Schools champions high-quality public education options by supporting and advocating for the state's 262 charter schools, which collectively serve more than 136,000 students. In today's challenging fiscal and political landscape, the League will pursue a robust policy agenda focused on empowering charter schools, advancing educational excellence, and addressing the needs of all students. Specifically, the League will prioritize the following policy topics during the 2026 Legislative Session:

- Equitable Bond Access
- Regulatory Relief
- Funding Equity
- Accountable Authorizing
- Defending the Charter Sector

03 Equitable — Bond Access

Ensuring charter schools **receive their fair share** of public facilities funding

Charter Schools Are Being Shut Out of Facilities Funding

Commissioned study reveals significant and persistent inequity

\$17.2B

Total public facilities
funding 2015–2024

90%

Share of facilities funding captured by
district bond money

3.6%

Charter school share
of district bond revenue

Key Finding

Between 2015–2024, district bond money accounted for \$15.5B (90%) of all public facilities funding. Charters — serving nearly 16% of Colorado students — received just 3.6% of that revenue.

SB-145: A Win for Charter Schools

SB-145 creates a more inclusive process and allows charter schools to be meaningfully consulted when a district goes for a bond, and allows for more transparency in which capital projects were included.

Senate Education Committee

5 – 0

Full Senate

34 – 1

House Education Committee

11 – 2

Full House

52 – 11

04 Regulatory — Relief

Reducing compliance burden so schools can focus on students

House Bill 1299: Unanimous Bipartisan Win

House Bill 1299 was a bipartisan bill written by the League that looked to repeal outdated policies and procedures across the education system.

The bill streamlines regulations, removes compliance burdens, and frees up school resources to focus on students rather than administrative overhead.

House Education

11 – 0

Unanimous

Senate Education

5 – 0

Unanimous

Full House

63 – 0

Unanimous

Full Senate

34 – 0

Unanimous

05 Funding — Equity

Addressing structural inequities in how public education dollars flow to charter schools

Charters and the New Funding Formula

Adopted in 2024, the new funding formula necessitated a new approach to charter funding – not a question of if but when and how

Our Approach

- Representative charter finance working group
- Those who stand to benefit under the new formula should be able to do so to the maximum extent possible
- Others should be able to experience a responsible transition
- No reason our transition mechanisms should differ in any meaningful way from districts'

Where We Are

- **Amendment adopted** via School Finance Act
- **"Hold harmless" for next 5 years:** FY26 total program + 1% in FY27; old district formula + 1% in FY28–FY31
- **Results in ~\$71M more** going into overall charter sector this year over last
- **~4.7% YOY increase** compared with the 3.8% projected for public schools in general

The Mechanics

- Shift towards calculating charters the same way as districts beginning in FY27
 - This will be based on the old district formula with all details included (latest cost of living factors, funding online, extended HS as the flat rates, including at risk concentration, etc.) as much as possible but supplemented by charters' own at-risk counts
- With that as a starting point, each charter will receive the greater of either new formula (at phase-in percent – 30% next year) or a defined "hold harmless" throughout the remaining years of the transition to the new formula
- For next school year, the hold harmless for charters will be FY26 total program + 1%, meaning that the minimum any school will receive next year is a 1% increase over their FY26 total program
 - This takes the place of things like at-risk supplemental, which was already phasing out but will now be repurposed for its last remaining year (next year) to help ensure everyone sees at least this 1% increase
- For FY28-FY31 – and in exact alignment with district hold harmless mechanisms – charter hold harmless will be old district formula + 1% until we reach full implementation of the new formula in FY32

06 Defense

Protecting charter school from funding cuts and harmful legislation



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**

We Defended the Charter Sector — and Held the Line on Funding

Defeated bills that negatively impacted charter schools and protected key funding streams in a difficult fiscal environment

\$56.7M

Increased CSI Mill Levy
Equalization Funding

\$43.3M

Charter Capital Construction
Funding Preserved

What DID NOT Happen

1

No broad anti-charter bill was introduced

2

Despite calls to cut the Part-Time Enrichment Program, funding stays funded at .5 PPR

3

Defeated proposals to cap (and reduce) CSI mill levy equalization fund

4

Amended SB-103 to repeal anti-charter proposal

5

Defeated SB 068 which would have significantly altered the accountability system

6

Amended HB 1141, which could have led to charter schools facing legal liability

1

WHAT DID NOT HAPPEN

No Broad Anti-Charter Bill Was Introduced



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**

No Anti-Charter Bill



Unlike in 2024, no major anti-charter legislation was introduced or gained traction this session.

That is a direct result of sustained relationship-building with the Governor's Office, legislative leaders in both parties, and the strong advocacy of Colorado's charter community.

2

WHAT DID NOT HAPPEN

Protecting Part-Time Enrichment



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**

3

WHAT DID NOT HAPPEN

Defeated Proposals to Cap CSI Mill Levy Equalization Fund and Reduce Charter Capital Construction



Colorado League of
Charter Schools

In order to balance the budget, JBC staff continued to bring proposals that would cap the CSI Mill Levy Equalization fund, or reduce it by 20%. We leveraged our relationships at the JBC and ensured those proposals were never considered seriously.

However, with another projected shortfall, we expect the CSI MLE to be targeted once again next legislative session.



Finally, we amended or opposed numerous bills that we thought would negatively impact charter schools. Here are a few examples:

We opposed SB 68, which we thought would jeopardize state accountability by limiting state testing. The bill eventually died.

Additionally, **we significantly amended HB 1141 and SB 103**, both of which we believed had the potential to negatively impact charter schools.

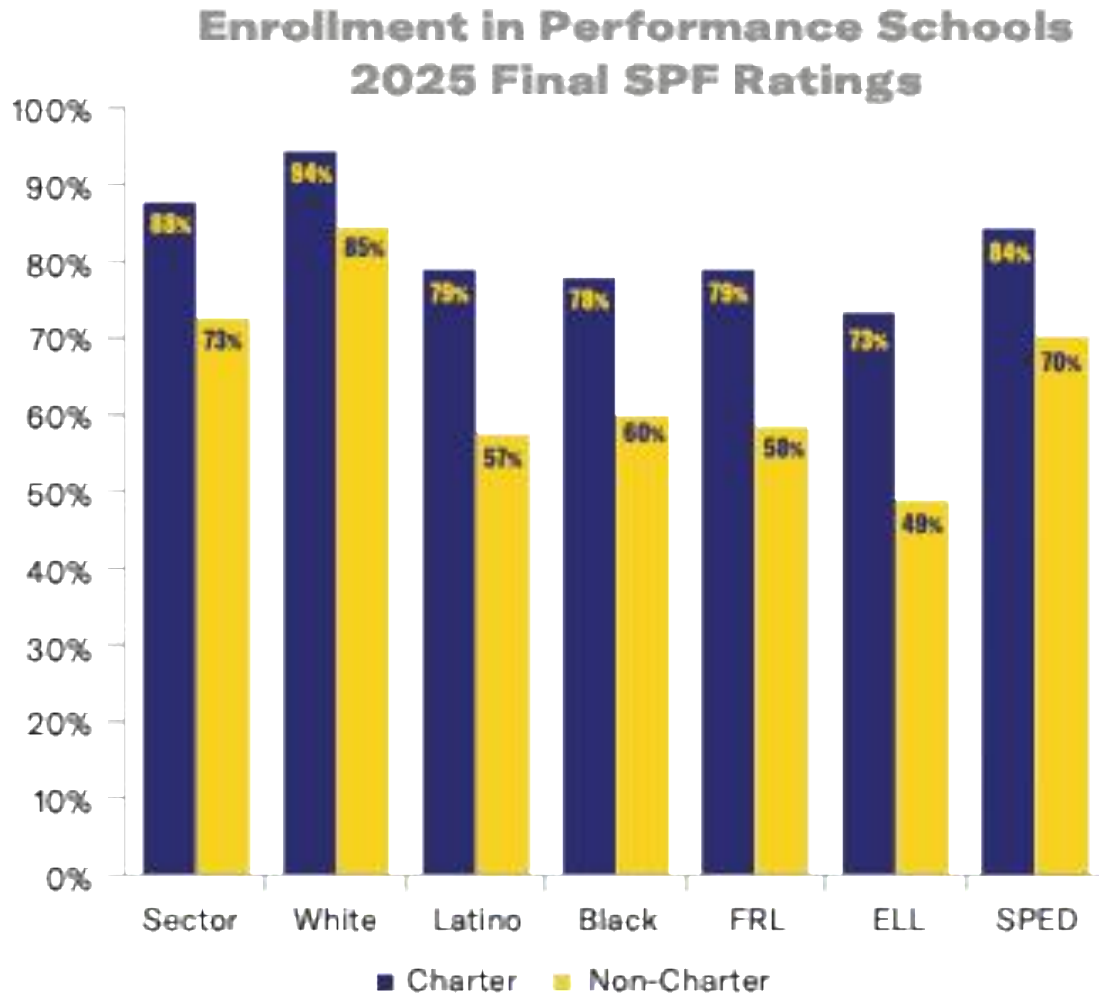
SB 103 would have prevented certain charter schools from being considered in planning regulations by county commissioners.

HB 1141 had the commendable intent on strengthening discriminatory law in K-12, we believed the language would lead to potential legal issues for K-12 public schools. **The bill passed, but our amendments were accepted.**

07 **Accountable** **— Authorizing**

Reforming Colorado's **authorizing environment**

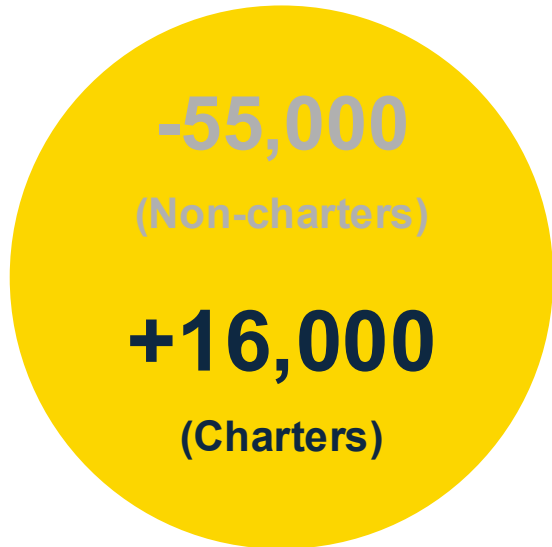
QUALITY



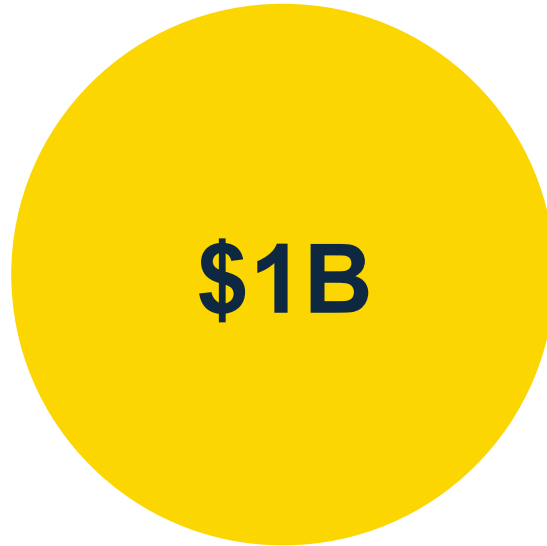
Colorado's charters reach new heights of quality with nearly 90% of students attending top-rated schools

and nearly 80% of low-income students doing the same (2025)

GROWTH AND FUNDING



Charter schools have grown by nearly 16,000 since 2017



One of only a few states in the country with a “Moral Obligation” credit enhancement program; increased the cap on this program to the highest level of any state in the country (2025)



Grew dedicated per-pupil funding for charter facilities (from under \$100 per student a little over a decade ago to nearly \$400 per student today - \$500 when you include federal funds)



GROWTH: Great Schools Colorado ('25-26)

Sector growth through federal funds

- 5 Continuation schools (2025)
- 15 Cycle One schools (2025)
- 7 Cycle Two schools (2026)

27 Charter Schools

\$35M+ Awarded



Summary

Legislative Wins

Growth

Funding

Quality





Save the date or register

Leadership Summit 2026

October 2, 2026, Westin Denver

Annual Conference 2027

March 4-5, 2027,

Gaylord Resort and Convention Center



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Thank you.

Please take our
town hall survey

