

TOWN HALL

January 16, 2026

www.coloradoleague.org

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Welcome

RENAME — “your name, school”

CHAT — when you can

MUTE — while not speaking

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Forward Together

Key Factors + Dynamics at Play

Kayla Tibbals, Principal

Nexus Policy Group

2026 Legislative Priorities

Prateek Dutta, VP of Policy

for the Colorado League of Charter Schools

Colorado Charter Schools Compensation Study

Sara Taylor, SHRM-SCP

Leaderscript Consulting Group

Current + past recordings available online at
coloradoleague.org/events/event-calendar/town-halls.html



**TODAY'S
AGENDA**

Forward Together

GREAT SCHOOLS COLORADO

The Great Schools Colorado 2025-2026 Request for Application (RFA) Webinar will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, from 8:30 am to 9:30 am. Please join us for more information about the competition and the RFA.

This Zoom meeting will review the eligibility criteria and prepare potential applicants. The meeting recording and more information are available on the Great Schools Colorado competitions page.

LEARN MORE

www.greatschoolscolorado.org/gsc-application.html



HIGHLIGHT

Key Factors + Dynamics at Play

Kayla Tibbals, Principal
Nexus Policy Group



2026 Legislative Session Overview

- ▶ The 2026 legislative session will be shaped by a structural budget shortfall and ongoing affordability pressures across health care, housing, and energy. Lawmakers are expected to confront difficult decisions to close an estimated \$800 million gap, with debates likely to center on Medicaid growth, housing supply proposals, and the Governor's energy priorities.
- ▶ At the same time, while Democratic majorities will continue to drive the legislative agenda, Jared Polis and senior lawmakers are entering the final phase of their tenures with a focus on securing legacy policy outcomes.
- ▶ Compounding these pressures is the approaching 2026 election, which will bring significant turnover and uncertainty across Colorado's political leadership. Taken together, these forces point to a session defined less by expansion and more by prioritization. For charter schools, success in 2026 will depend on bipartisan support, protecting existing law, the continued advocacy from the League.

Session and budget context: the constraint that drives everything

- ▶ Colorado's nonpartisan Legislative Council forecast (December 2025) shows a strained General Fund picture:
- ▶ The state is projected to end FY 2025-26 with a 12.3% reserve, which is \$398.6 million below the statutory reserve requirement under current law.
- ▶ For FY 2026-27, even assuming spending stays flat, the forecast projects \$163.5 million less available to spend or save than FY 2025-26.
- ▶ The forecast also warns the budget is unusually sensitive because revenue is expected to fall short of the Referendum C cap in FY 2025-26, meaning forecast changes hit the budget dollar-for-dollar.

Medicaid and K12 on a collision course

- Medicaid finances will be central to the budget debate. Governor Polis' draft budget and the budget amendment on January 2nd already flagged Medicaid reductions as a major priority.
- The Office of State Budget and Planning (OSPB) is determined to cap the growth of Medicaid in order to manage the state's structural deficit.
- OSPB has reported that the state's Medicaid budget is increasing at a rate of 9% a year while the state's revenue is only growing at 4% a year due to the constraints of TABOR.

Medicaid and K12 on a collision course

- The Governor's office and a bipartisan majority have publicly committed to keeping K12 whole refusing to bring back the Budget Stabilization factor or make cuts.
- Despite the fiscal strain, the Governor's budget provides a \$276 million increase in total program funding, raising per-pupil funding to \$12,272 and continuing implementation of the new student-centered school finance formula enacted in 2025.
- It also includes \$14.5 million for categorical programs that support special education, transportation, and English language learners, and \$14.3 million to fully fund the Universal Preschool Program, which now serves about 70 percent of eligible four-year-olds.

What's in the spotlight this session?

- ▶ The Trump Administration
- ▶ Budget Deficit
- ▶ Medicaid Cuts
- ▶ Workforce and Higher Education Consolidation
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ School Finance

2026 Legislative Priorities

Prateek Dutta
VP of Policy



Political Context

Another **\$800 million dollar** shortfall is projected this year.

The governor's budget proposal raises many unanswered questions.

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 in the past summer.

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.

Legislative Agenda 2026

- **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 in a difficult political environment.

Charter Funding Fix

Dan Schaller
President



Charter Funding Fix: Background

- 1. 2024: New, more student-focused school funding formula adopted by the state; first new formula in 30 years**
- 2. Spring, 2025: Realization that new funding formula and Charter Schools Act don't "talk"**
- 3. April, 2025: Temporary compromise adopted as part of the School Finance Act to largely hold status quo in place for one year; direction for General Assembly to consult with CLCS and CASE in formulating more long-term solution during the interim**

Charter Funding Fix: Principles & Research

1. **Students over systems, yes**
2. **But how do we do this in a way that responsibly unwinds 30 years' worth of diverse charter funding arrangements**
3. **Schools that would benefit should, those that might not should have access to the same (if not stronger) phase-in provisions that districts negotiated for themselves**
4. **The typical charter today is still only receiving funding at a level that enables them to spend at 81% of the standard TPS**

Phase-In of New Formula Under HB 25-1320

Year	Current Law	Under Bill
FY 2025-26	18%	15%
FY 2026-27	34%	30%
FY 2027-28	50%	45%
FY 2028-29	66%	60%
FY 2029-30	82%	75%
FY 2030-31	100%	90%
FY 2031-32	100%	100%

Hold Harmless Provisions Under HB25-1320

Year	Current Law	Bill
FY 2025-26	Old Formula + 0.5%	FY 2024-25 Actual
FY 2026-27	Old Formula + 0.5%	FY 2024-25 Actual
FY 2027-28	Old Formula + 0.5%	Old Formula + 1%
FY 2028-29	Old Formula + 0.5%	Old Formula + 1%
FY 2029-30	Old Formula + 0.5%	Old Formula + 1%
FY 2030-31	N/A	Old Formula + 1%
FY 2031-32	N/A	N/A

Charter Funding Fix: Latest Status

- 1. Representative charter group meeting regularly with CASE**
- 2. Agreement in principle on new formula yes but paired with “responsible transition”**
- 3. Exploring various hold harmless options (i.e. FY26 + inflation, old formula + x%)**
- 4. Hoping to reach resolution as soon as possible to provide schools with clarity on their 2026–27 budgets**

Colorado Charter Schools Compensation Study

Sara Taylor

Leaderscript Consulting Group



A photograph of a smiling female teacher with long brown hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and blue jeans, dancing in a bright, airy classroom. She is surrounded by five young children of diverse backgrounds who are also dancing or moving joyfully. The room features light-colored wooden floors, white walls adorned with several framed children's drawings, and a large window on the right side with a white radiator underneath. The overall atmosphere is warm and positive.

Charter Compensation in Uncertain Times

Hope for the best, plan for the worst

**Uncertainty
we cannot
control**

**Moves we can
control**

The market moved – salaries did not

Affording modest one-bedroom housing statewide generally requires salaries of \$75k–\$80k, above entry-level and many mid-career teacher pay levels.



Why the Gap Persists

District base salary floors increase faster than charter budgets

Facilities and operations may be more expensive due to scale and access to buildings

Charter scale varies dramatically (especially single site versus network).

Charters are less likely to have transparent salary bands

Vacancies and Turnover



**Special
Education**



**Secondary
Math**



**Secondary
Science**



**Rural
Communities**

Mid-year vacancies average 8–12 weeks



Budget Impact Differs

**\$1,000
Raise**



Staff Cut



Practical Implications and Action Steps

Determine What You Value

And publish a transparent salary schedule



Use Targeted Pay Moves



**Step Floor
Resets**



**Differentiated
Lanes**



**Longevity
Bands**



**Multilingual /
Hard-to-Fill
Stipends**

Resist “across the board” increases

Add low cost, high value benefits and tell the story

Sub Coverage



Mental Health Days



Family Supports



Local Partnerships



Conservative Budget, Clear Guardrails



Engage your Board & Team

Understand risk & scenarios

Plan to conserve cash



Maximize revenue

Recommended Actions

1

Compensation Equity Audit

Where do we see compensation compression, and which roles are currently the hardest to staff?

2

Publish Salary Bands

How transparent are our salary bands and pathways, and how might greater transparency strengthen recruitment?

3

Sustainable Pay Moves

Which two targeted pay moves could we sustain over time without creating future budget risk?

4

Benefit Upgrades

Which benefits most increase educator stay power and authentically reflect our school's values?

5

Three-Year Scenario

How well does our salary strategy align to a three year financial scenario under conservative funding assumptions?

CLCS 2026 Conference

2/26

Th

**Beyond
Compensation:
Fostering a Culture
where Teachers
Thrive and Stay**

2/27

F

**Solve Your Teacher
Shortage: Turning
Today's Staff into
Tomorrow's
Teachers**



thank
you

DR. SARA TAYLOR

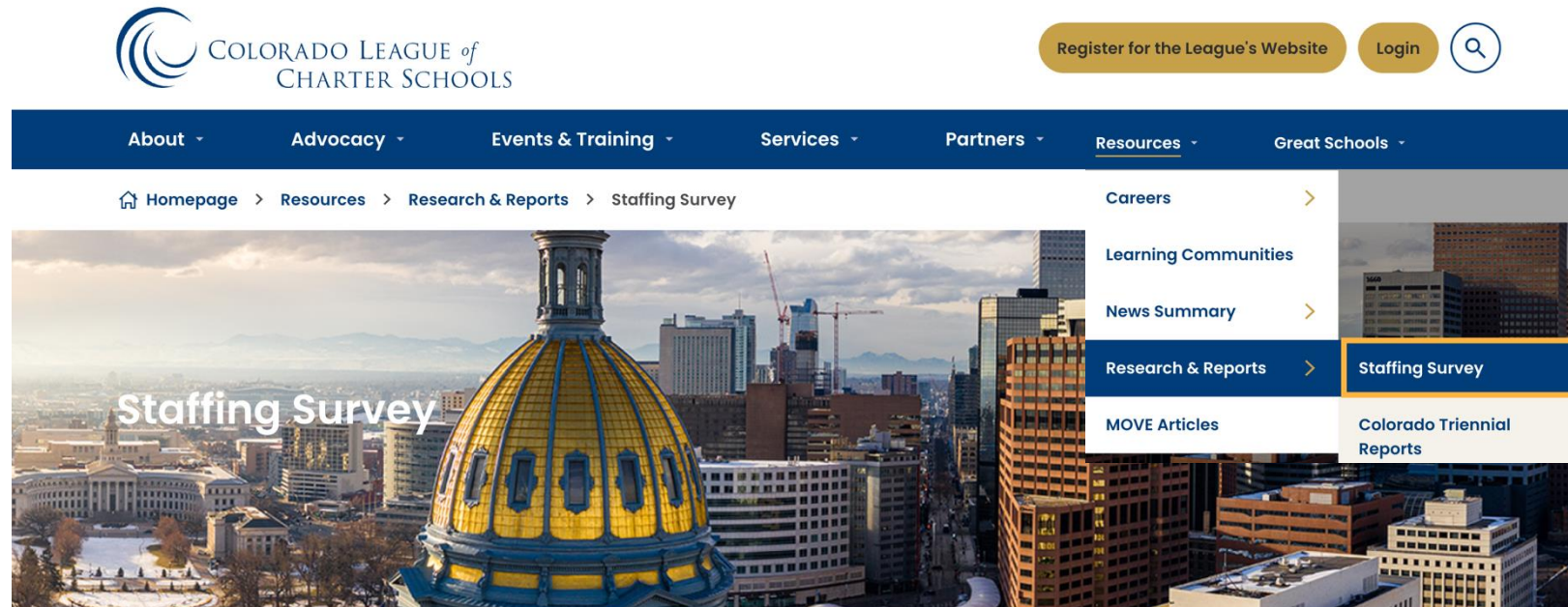
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COLORADO LEAGUE of
CHARTER SCHOOLS

VIEW THE **COMPENSATION STUDY** ON OUR WEBSITE



State of Charter School Compensation in Colorado 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [executive summary](#) highlights key findings from the Colorado League of Charter Schools' latest compensation study, examining salary trends, benefits, and total compensation across roles and regions statewide. The findings point to persistent challenges related to recruitment, retention, cost-of-living pressures, and regional disparities that impact charter schools' ability to attract and sustain a strong workforce.

The summary outlines statewide patterns and high-level implications for school leaders and boards, while underscoring the importance of compensation as a strategic lever for staff stability, organizational health, and student success.

www.coloradoleague.org/resources/research-reports/staffing-survey.html

Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026

Denver Marriott Tech Center

**forward
together
2026**



COLORADO LEAGUE of
CHARTER SCHOOLS



**“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you
want to go far, go together.”
— *African proverb***

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Online at coloradoleague.org > about > who we are > league staff

Thank you

Thanks for being here

Don't hesitate to get in touch with us



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