



Fiscal Note
Legislative Council Staff
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SB 25-316: AURARIA HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER APPROPRIATION

Prime Sponsors:

Sen. Amabile; Bridges
Rep. Taggart; Sirota

Fiscal Analyst:

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Bill Outcome: Signed into Law
Drafting number: LLS 25-1016

Version: Final Fiscal Note
Date: July 17, 2025

Fiscal note status: The final fiscal note reflects the enacted bill, which was requested by the Joint Budget Committee.

Summary Information

Overview. The bill sets requirements for state appropriations to the Department of Higher Education for use by the Auraria Higher Education Center for FY 2025-26; requires a comprehensive study of the center’s operations, and adjusts appropriations in the 2025 Long Bill.

Types of impacts. The bill is projected to affect the following areas in FY 2025-26 only:

- State Expenditures
- State Revenue
- TABOR Refunds

Appropriations. For FY 2025-26, the bill includes multiple appropriation changes that result in no net change in appropriations. See State Appropriations Section for more detail.

Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts

Type of Impact	Budget Year FY 2025-26	Out Year FY 2026-27
State Revenue	\$0	\$0
State Expenditures	\$0	\$0
Transferred Funds	\$0	\$0
Change in TABOR Refunds	-\$31.4 million	\$0
Change in State FTE	0.0 FTE	0.0 FTE

Summary of Legislation

The bill requires that appropriations to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) for use by the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) for FY 2025-26 be used only as agreed upon by the constituent institutions of AHEC in baseline service level agreements. AHEC must establish fee structures for additional services, and the schools may enter into additional agreements with AHEC for services not provide in the baseline agreements.

AHEC must present quarterly reports on the agreements to the schools during FY 2025-26.

AHEC Comprehensive Study

The bill requires that the constituent schools, in consultation with AHEC, contract with an independent third party to conduct a comprehensive study examining the operations of the Auraria campus, and the services provided to students by the constituent institutions and AHEC. The final report must be presented by December 31, 2025, with extensions to January 30 2026, if circumstances prevent meeting the first deadline. The Colorado Commission on Higher Education must contract with the entity if the schools and the center cannot agree on a vendor.

Appropriation Changes

The bill changes appropriations as follows:

- reduces the General Fund appropriation to the DHE for fee-for-service contracts and College Opportunity Fund for AHEC constituent schools by \$31.4 million, and reduces the reappropriations for each institution proportionately; and
- reduces the reappropriated funds to AHEC by \$31.4 million, and instead appropriates General Fund to AHEC in the same amount for FY 2025-26 only.

Background

The constituent schools of the Auraria Campus are: the Community College of Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and the University of Colorado Denver. Under current law, the constituent schools receive General Fund appropriations as fee-for-service contracts each year. The schools then co-mingle the state appropriation with tuition revenue, and pay AHEC for administrative services. Because AHEC is a state entity, these payments are counted as revenue against the state's TABOR limit, even though the same amount was counted against the limit when originally placed in the General Fund. This has resulted in a double count of revenue against the state TABOR limit. By refinancing the appropriations, this bill eliminates the double count in FY 2025-26, and therefore reduces the TABOR refund obligation, while increasing the amount of General Fund the General Assembly has to spend or save.

State Revenue and Expenditures

The bill increases state expenditures for the constituent schools of AHEC to solicit and contract for a third party vendor to conduct the comprehensive study. This cost, which has not been estimated, will be paid by institutional resources available to the constituent schools and no additional state appropriation is required.

The bill eliminates a shift of state revenue from TABOR-exempt institutions of higher education to AHEC, a state entity subject to TABOR, by providing a direct General Fund appropriation to AHEC. By eliminating this shift in revenue, state revenue subject to TABOR correspondingly decreases.

TABOR Refunds

The bill is expected to decrease the amount of state revenue required to be refunded to taxpayers by the amount shown in Table 1 above. This estimate assumes the March 2025 LCS revenue forecast. A forecast of state revenue subject to TABOR is not available beyond FY 2026-27. Because TABOR refunds are paid from the General Fund, decreased revenue from institutions of higher education to AHEC will lower the TABOR refund obligation, and therefore increase the amount of General Fund otherwise available to spend or save.

State Appropriations

For FY 2025-26, the bill makes several adjustments to the 2025 Long Bill, which result in no net change to General Fund appropriations.

The bill decreases the General Fund appropriations to the Department of Higher Education for fee-for-service contracts and the Colorado Opportunity Fund by \$31,435,042, and decreases the reappropriated funds to the governing boards of constituent institutions of AHEC as follows:

- -\$15,623,129 to Metropolitan State University of Denver;
- -\$11,739,171 to the University of Colorado Denver; and,
- -\$4,072,742 to the State Board of Community Colleges and Occupational Education system.

The bill decreases reappropriated funds for AHEC by \$31,435,042.

The bill appropriates \$31,435,042 General Fund to the Department of Higher Education for use by AHEC. The department may use this appropriation as follows:

- \$29,545,253 for operational costs; and
- \$1,889,789 for deferred maintenance projects.

Effective Date

This bill was signed into law by the Governor and took effect on June 4, 2025.

State and Local Government Contacts

Joint Budget Committee

The revenue and expenditure impacts in this fiscal note represent changes from current law under the bill for each fiscal year. For additional information about fiscal notes, please visit the [General Assembly website](#).