

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

ENGROSSED

LLS NO. R25-1051.01 Jessica Chapman x4636

SJR25-021

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Kipp and Bridges, Amabile, Ball, Coleman, Cutter, Danielson, Daugherty, Gonzales J., Hinrichsen, Jodeh, Kolker, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Roberts, Rodriguez, Snyder, Sullivan, Wallace, Weissman, Winter F.

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 25-021

101 **CONCERNING A COMMITMENT TO PURSUING FULL AND FAIR FUNDING**
102 **OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

1 WHEREAS, Public education is the bedrock of our democracy,
2 fundamental to individual opportunity, the underpinning of thriving
3 communities, and the key to Colorado's economic prosperity and future;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, Wise and adequate investment in Colorado's schools
6 is essential to maintaining and improving the competitiveness of
7 Colorado and its students; and

8 WHEREAS, The funds invested in Colorado's public schools have
9 a return on investment that has long been recognized among the nation's
10 highest; and

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

SENATE
Final Reading
April 16, 2025

1 WHEREAS, Increasing rates of high school graduation, industry
2 certifications, and associates degrees demonstrate the effectiveness of
3 Colorado's investment in public schools; and

4 WHEREAS, Research demonstrates that increased funding for
5 schools results in long-term gains in graduation rates and lifetime wages,
6 prevents crime, and lowers incarceration costs; and

7 WHEREAS, Educators and support staff in every school district
8 and school across Colorado make invaluable contributions to their
9 schools, districts, and communities by dedicating their time, talents, and
10 out-of-pocket funds to their students, despite Colorado having the largest
11 "teacher pay penalty" in the nation; and

12 WHEREAS, A study published in March 2022 in SAGE Open
13 found that when public school teachers are paid more, students perform
14 better, leading to improved academic outcomes; and

15 WHEREAS, Colorado is currently funding schools at a level that
16 approximates the state's 1989 per-pupil spending adjusted for inflation,
17 which does not account for the cost increases experienced by school
18 districts for health care, energy use, and PERA contributions or for the
19 additional demands on schools that have arisen in the past three decades
20 for such developments as standards-based education, rapid advances in
21 technology and career technical education, and behavioral health
22 challenges related to COVID, trauma, and social media; and

23 WHEREAS, In 2023, the general assembly took concrete steps to
24 investigate and address the need for additional school funding resources
25 in light of changes made by the passage of Senate Bill 23-287, the School
26 Finance Act, which created a School Finance Task Force to make
27 recommendations for beneficial changes to the school finance formula
28 and commissioned two "adequacy studies" to assess what resources and
29 additional funding would be necessary to ensure that all Colorado
30 students can reach the standards and requirements set by the state of
31 Colorado; and

32 WHEREAS, The general assembly passed a supplemental
33 appropriations bill in 2024, dedicating \$3 million to the adequacy studies
34 to ensure that they are conducted to the highest standards of rigor,
35 research, and data analysis -- of which, Colorado spent \$2 million; and

1 WHEREAS, In 2024, the School Finance Task Force issued a
2 report to the general assembly with recommendations for the legislature
3 to make changes to the school finance formula to improve the equity and
4 adequacy of school funding -- some of which were incorporated in House
5 Bill 24-1448 -- and suggested that the legislature "should annually revisit
6 and update the base and need weights" and that "[u]pdates should reflect
7 the results of the adequacy studies when they have been published"; and

8 WHEREAS, In January 2025, the legislature received the reports
9 and recommendations of the two commissioned studies: "Equity and
10 Adequacy of Colorado School Funding - A Cost-Modeling Approach" by
11 the American Institute for Research (AIR) and "Colorado Input-Based
12 Financial Adequacy Study Report," by Augenblick, Pailaich and
13 Associates, Inc (APA); and

14 WHEREAS, Both studies found that Colorado's teachers' salaries
15 are too low, and the tax system that supports schools is inequitable and
16 inadequate; and

17 WHEREAS, The AIR study recommends that the Colorado
18 legislature commit to set funding levels commensurate with Colorado's
19 education goals, increase funding weights for at-risk students so more
20 resources are based on student need, raise teacher pay and hire more
21 teachers, reduce inequity in local taxes, and adjust salaries to account for
22 regional differences in cost of living; and

23 WHEREAS, The APA study recommends that the state provide a
24 funding base of \$12,346 per student, that small districts should continue
25 to receive extra funding, and that the state should provide funding to
26 equalize mill levy override funding across districts; and

27 WHEREAS, According to the study by APA, adequate funding
28 would be \$3.5 billion higher than the current level, and \$3.1 billion higher
29 than the House Bill 24-1448 formula would be when fully implemented;
30 and

31 WHEREAS, Were Colorado funding our schools fully and fairly
32 as defined by the adequacy studies, every student would have the
33 individual attention they need from teachers, counselors, health
34 professionals, tutors, and support staff to succeed and thrive; every
35 teacher would have a reasonable workload, professional development and
36 coaching, and a salary that would allow them to live where they work;

1 and every community would enjoy the benefit of vibrant public schools,
2 a high-quality workforce, and an engaged citizenry; and

3 WHEREAS, The sustainability and adequacy of public school
4 funding in Colorado is currently threatened by Colorado's fiscal
5 constraints, the depletion of the state education fund, and the potential of
6 federal funding cuts to education, Medicaid, school nutrition, human
7 services, and other critical programs; and

8 WHEREAS, The general assembly has both the opportunity and
9 the responsibility to turn the adequacy study data into a multi-year,
10 structured plan -- Colorado's Blueprint for Student Success -- to create a
11 Colorado where every child has access to great teachers, individual
12 attention, support services, appropriate technology, and a broad,
13 high-quality education so they can thrive; and

14 WHEREAS, Failing to make progress towards the implementation
15 of the adequacy study recommendations would result in a waste of the
16 funds used to commission these high-quality studies, as well as break
17 trust with the students who rely on adults to solve difficult problems that
18 will fundamentally impact their lives; now, therefore,

19 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-fifth General Assembly*
20 *of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:*

21

22 That we, the members of the General Assembly:

23 (1) Reaffirm the critical importance of public education and the
24 fair and full funding thereof; and

25 (2) Declare that it is the intent of the Colorado Senate to honor the
26 \$2 million investment in the adequacy studies made by the taxpayers of
27 Colorado by taking concrete steps to gain an understanding of the
28 findings and recommendations of the studies, choose which study's
29 methodology and recommendations to follow, and develop a multi-year
30 implementation plan, including revenue triggers, to phase in the
31 recommendations.

32 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent
33 to Governor Jared Polis, Senate President James Coleman, Senate
34 Majority Leader Robert Rodriguez, Senate Minority Leader Paul

- 1 Lundeen, House Speaker Julie McCluskie, House Majority Leader
- 2 Monica Duran, and House Minority Leader Rose Pugliese.