

Testimony in Support of HB17-1003, Strategic Plan to Address Teacher Shortages Senate Education – April 12, 2017 – Leslie Colwell

- Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Leslie Colwell and I'm VP for Education Initiatives at the CCC. I want to thank Sen. Coram for bringing attention to the important and ongoing educator workforce challenges that rural districts are facing in Colorado and sponsoring HB-1003.
- Every summer and fall I have the opportunity to travel across Colorado, each year meeting superintendents, school board members, educators, and parents and discussing the unique educational opportunities and challenges in communities.
- Over the last two years several major themes have emerged, but the most universal and urgent theme by far has been how every district struggles in some way with recruitment and retention of educator talent – I hear this in literally almost every conversation.
- The anecdotes I hear are confirmed by the decline in enrollment numbers you have heard. I visited with a faculty member at one preparation program that regularly prepares 30-40 teachers for classrooms in mostly southern Colorado each year – last year, there were only 8 incoming candidates.
- Many schools and districts are meeting these challenges successfully – from developing “grow your own” and teacher-share programs to establishing innovative partnerships with alternative licensure programs to recruiting educators from other states or countries to off-setting housing costs and forgiving student loans.
- Through a strategic plan, we see an opportunity to identify solutions that could be tailored to communities. This would not mean usurping local control or establishing a mandate. A strategic plan will require prioritizing strategies to address teaching shortages, which is a critical step in addressing this statewide problem.
- Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.