

Testimony as Prepared for Delivery in Support of SB23-287: Public School Finance by Leslie Colwell, Vice President of Youth Success Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign

Senate Education Committee

April 19, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

- Madam Chair and members of the committee, good afternoon, my name is Leslie Colwell and I am the Vice President of Youth Success Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign. We are a non-profit, non-partisan, policy and advocacy organization, committed to advocating for every chance for every child.
- Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the School Finance Act and thanks especially to Sens. Zenzinger and Lundeen for your leadership on this bill and your commitment to improving the state's school finance system, which is a critical lever for making sure every kid gets what they need to thrive.
- We're thrilled to see the proposed increased funding in the mill levy override match fund. Senate Bill 202, passed last year with Senators Zenzinger and Rankin as sponsors, established this targeted state investment in our lowest-wealth school districts. The fund was designed by district CFOs convened by CASE to assist our districts that always struggle for adequate funding to meet student needs. This funding will be a game changer, especially for many small, rural districts with low property wealth.
- We're also encouraged to see a narrow and prescriptive charge around fixing the parts of the funding formula that are most broken. After many years of talking about the ways our formula could be modernized and made more equitable and student-centered, this bill establishes a vehicle to propose concrete changes to be implemented next session.
- We've seen success with similarly structured work groups, such as the at-risk factor work group established last year by HB-1202. We also support the provision in this bill that delays the implementation of a new at-risk factor until next year, when the data which that factor will be based upon are available.
- Thank you for your time and your support of SB-287.