

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

PREAMENDED

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 26-0696.01 Lindy Schaible x4215

SENATE BILL 26-170

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Coleman,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Bacon,

Senate Committees

Education
Appropriations

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING CREATING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HOW TO EXPAND**
102 **ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR COLORADO**
103 **STUDENTS.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill creates the access to opportunity task force (task force) to study and report on how to expand access to effective public schools to address opportunity gaps. The bill requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the education committees of the house of representatives and the senate, the governor, the state board of

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.*

education, the commissioner of education, and the department of education on or before January 1, 2027. The task force will only conduct a study and prepare a report if the department of education receives sufficient gifts, grants, and donations.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds that:

4 (a) Public education has long been regarded as the great equalizer
5 in American society, serving as the primary pathway through which every
6 child, regardless of background or circumstances, is intended to access
7 opportunity and achieve success;

8 (b) Yet in Colorado, persistent learning and opportunity gaps
9 across race, socioeconomic status, language, disability, and geography
10 demonstrate that this promise has not been fully realized. For too many
11 students, educational outcomes remain highly predictable based on the
12 circumstances into which students are born, reinforcing rather than
13 dismantling longstanding inequities.

14 (c) At the same time, communities across Colorado are
15 demonstrating every day that different outcomes are possible. Schools and
16 programs in diverse regions of the state are producing strong academic
17 results for historically underserved students, such as students in poverty,
18 students of color, and students learning English as a second language.
19 These students are showing that high expectations, effective practices,
20 and intentional system design can close long-standing learning and
21 opportunity gaps.

22 (d) These successes are not isolated miracles; they demonstrate
23 that Colorado's education system can fulfill its promise when policy and

1 system design are aligned around high expectations for all students.

2 (2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that Colorado must
3 no longer accept persistent learning and opportunity gaps as inevitable,
4 nor treat educational inequity as an intractable condition. Instead,
5 Colorado must commit to learning from proven successes, removing
6 systemic barriers, and modernizing its education system to ensure that
7 every student has access to a high-quality education.

8 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add 22-1-151** as
9 follows:

10 **22-1-151. Access to opportunity task force - creation -**
11 **members - duties - report - definitions - repeal.**

12 (1) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE
13 REQUIRES:

14 (a) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
15 CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-1-115.

16 (b) "OPPORTUNITY GAPS" MEANS DISPARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL
17 ACCESS AND OUTCOMES EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS BASED ON FACTORS
18 SUCH AS RACE, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, AND GEOGRAPHY THAT MAY
19 RESULT FROM PAST AND PRESENT DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND
20 SYSTEM POLICIES; LOCAL BOARD GOVERNANCE DECISIONS; RESOURCE
21 ALLOCATION; AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED EDUCATORS; INSTRUCTIONAL
22 PRACTICES; FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; AND SCHOOL
23 CLIMATE.

24 (c) "RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOL" MEANS A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN
25 COLORADO THAT THE DEPARTMENT DETERMINES IS RURAL BASED ON THE
26 GEOGRAPHIC SIZE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL'S SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE
27 DISTANCE FROM THE NEAREST LARGE, URBANIZED AREA, AND THE TOTAL

1 STUDENT ENROLLMENT OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT IS SIX THOUSAND FIVE
2 HUNDRED OR FEWER STUDENTS.

3 (d) "STATE BOARD" MEANS THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
4 CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 1 OF ARTICLE IX OF THE
5 STATE CONSTITUTION.

6 (2) THE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY TASK FORCE IS CREATED IN THE
7 DEPARTMENT TO STUDY HOW TO EXPAND ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE PUBLIC
8 SCHOOLS AND PRACTICES FOR EVERY COLORADO STUDENT.

9 (3) THE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY TASK FORCE CONSISTS OF
10 MEMBERS APPOINTED AS FOLLOWS:

11 (a) THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE SHALL APPOINT THE
12 FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

13 (I) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE BOARD;

14 (II) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A COMMUNITY
15 ORGANIZATION WITH A FOCUS ON CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS;

16 (III) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A METRO DENVER SCHOOL LEADER AT
17 A COLORADO PUBLIC SCHOOL WITH A DEMONSTRATED TRACK RECORD OF
18 MEANINGFULLY NARROWING OPPORTUNITY GAPS; AND

19 (IV) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A STATEWIDE
20 ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS EDUCATORS;

21 (b) THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SHALL
22 APPOINT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

23 (I) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A SCHOOL LEADER AT A RURAL PUBLIC
24 SCHOOL;

25 (II) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A STATEWIDE
26 ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS TEACHERS; AND

27 (III) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A STATEWIDE

1 PARENT ORGANIZATION THAT FOCUSES ON EDUCATION POLICY AND
2 CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS;

3 (c) THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MINORITY LEADER SHALL
4 APPOINT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

5 (I) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A SCHOOL LEADER AT A PUBLIC SCHOOL
6 IN SOUTHERN COLORADO WITH A DEMONSTRATED TRACK RECORD OF
7 MEANINGFULLY NARROWING OPPORTUNITY GAPS;

8 (II) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A STATEWIDE
9 ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS SUPERINTENDENTS; AND

10 (III) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A SCHOOL TEACHER IN A COLORADO
11 PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOM WITH A DEMONSTRATED TRACK RECORD OF
12 MEANINGFULLY NARROWING OPPORTUNITY GAPS;

13 (d) THE SENATE MINORITY LEADER SHALL APPOINT THE
14 FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

15 (I) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A STATEWIDE
16 ORGANIZATION THAT FOCUSES ON EDUCATION POLICY AND CLOSING
17 OPPORTUNITY GAPS;

18 (II) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A STATEWIDE
19 ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS EDUCATORS WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS
20 ON EDUCATION POLICY AND CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS; AND

21 (III) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A SCHOOL LEADER AT A COLORADO
22 PUBLIC SCHOOL THAT IS A COMMUNITY SCHOOL AS DEFINED IN SECTION
23 22-32.5-103 AND THAT HAS A DEMONSTRATED TRACK RECORD OF
24 MEANINGFULLY NARROWING OPPORTUNITY GAPS;

25 (e) THE GOVERNOR SHALL APPOINT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

26 (I) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GOVERNOR'S
27 OFFICE;

1 (II) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A STATEWIDE
2 ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS CHARTER SCHOOLS;

3 (III) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A SCHOOL LEADER AT A PUBLIC SCHOOL
4 IN NORTHERN COLORADO WITH A DEMONSTRATED TRACK RECORD OF
5 MEANINGFULLY NARROWING OPPORTUNITY GAPS; AND

6 (IV) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A RECENT GRADUATE OF A COLORADO
7 PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL WITH A DEMONSTRATED TRACK RECORD OF
8 MEANINGFULLY NARROWING OPPORTUNITY GAPS; AND

9 (f) THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, OR THEIR DESIGNEE, SHALL
10 APPOINT ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT WHO FOCUSES ON
11 ADDRESSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS.

12 (4) THE APPOINTING AUTHORITIES SHALL MAKE THEIR INITIAL
13 APPOINTMENTS TO THE TASK FORCE NO LATER THAN JULY 1, 2026.

14 (5) EACH MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE SERVES AT THE PLEASURE
15 OF THEIR RESPECTIVE APPOINTING OFFICIAL. IF A TASK FORCE VACANCY
16 OCCURS, THE ORIGINAL APPOINTING AUTHORITY SHALL, WITHIN FOURTEEN
17 DAYS AFTER THE VACANCY, APPOINT A NEW TASK FORCE MEMBER WHO
18 SATISFIES THE MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS OF THE VACATED SEAT.

19 (6) TASK FORCE MEMBERS DO NOT RECEIVE COMPENSATION OR
20 REIMBURSEMENT FOR EXPENSES.

21 (7) (a) THE TASK FORCE SHALL ALLOW FOR REMOTE
22 PARTICIPATION IN EACH MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE.

23 (b) THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, OR THEIR DESIGNEE, SHALL
24 CONVENE THE FIRST MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE NO LATER THAN ONE
25 MONTH AFTER THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, OR THEIR DESIGNEE,
26 HAS DETERMINED THAT THE TASK FORCE HAS RECEIVED AN AMOUNT OF
27 GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS SUFFICIENT TO BEGIN ITS WORK

1 DESCRIBED IN THIS SECTION OR JULY 31, 2026, WHICHEVER IS LATER.

2 (c) AT OR BEFORE THE FIRST TASK FORCE MEETING, THE PRESIDENT
3 OF THE SENATE SHALL APPOINT THE TASK FORCE CHAIR AND THE SPEAKER
4 OF THE HOUSE SHALL APPOINT THE TASK FORCE VICE-CHAIR. THE CHAIR OF
5 THE TASK FORCE SHALL CONVENE THE TASK FORCE MEETINGS AFTER THE
6 FIRST MEETING. THE TASK FORCE SHALL MEET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES AND
7 SHALL COMPLETE ITS DUTIES NO LATER THAN JANUARY 1, 2027.

8 (8) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONTRACT WITH AN INDEPENDENT
9 THIRD-PARTY ENTITY TO FACILITATE TASK FORCE MEETINGS, ASSIST IN
10 CONDUCTING THE STUDY REQUIRED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (10) OF
11 THIS SECTION, AND PREPARE A WRITTEN REPORT SUMMARIZING THE
12 STUDY'S FINDINGS AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE
13 ISSUED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (12) OF THIS SECTION. THE
14 INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY ENTITY MUST BE A PREAPPROVED VENDOR
15 FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S PRICE AGREEMENT LIST.

16 (9) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND STAFF
17 SUPPORT, OTHER THAN THE STAFF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE
18 THIRD-PARTY ENTITY DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (8) OF THIS SECTION, TO
19 THE TASK FORCE AND THIRD-PARTY ENTITY UPON THE REQUEST OF THE
20 TASK FORCE CHAIR TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY FOR THE TASK FORCE TO
21 COMPLETE ITS DUTIES DESCRIBED IN THIS SECTION. THE DEPARTMENT
22 SHALL PROVIDE THE THIRD PARTY SECURE ACCESS TO DATA CURRENTLY
23 COLLECTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO ALLOW THE THIRD PARTY TO
24 COMPILER, ANALYZE, AND PROVIDE TO THE TASK FORCE THE DATA
25 NECESSARY TO CONSIDER THE ISSUES DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (10) OF
26 THIS SECTION.

27 (10) THE STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE TASK FORCE MUST CONSIDER:

1 (a) THE CURRENT STATE OF OPPORTUNITY GAPS ACROSS
2 COLORADO, IDENTIFYING WHERE GAPS ARE GEOGRAPHICALLY MOST
3 PREVALENT AND PERSISTENT, AND THE DISAGGREGATED SUBGROUPS OF
4 STUDENTS MOST IMPACTED BY THE GAPS;

5 (b) THE COLORADO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS WITH A
6 DEMONSTRATED TRACK RECORD OF CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS BASED
7 ON ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AS A NECESSARY STARTING POINT, WITH THE
8 UNDERSTANDING THAT OPPORTUNITY GAPS ARE INFLUENCED BY MULTIPLE
9 FACTORS AND THAT THE TASK FORCE MAY CHOOSE TO CONSIDER
10 ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF DATA THAT EMPHASIZE STUDENT SUCCESS AND
11 WELL-BEING;

12 (c) THE PROGRAMS, STRATEGIES, PRACTICES, AND CONDITIONS,
13 INCLUDING, BUT NOT NECESSARILY LIMITED TO, CONDITIONS OF POLICY,
14 RESOURCE ALLOCATION, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, SCHOOL
15 PHILOSOPHY, AND SCHOOL CLIMATE, OF THE SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS
16 IDENTIFIED IN SUBSECTION (10)(b) OF THIS SECTION THAT MOST
17 CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS IN CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS;

18 (d) THE NONFINANCIAL BARRIERS THAT PREVENT EFFECTIVE
19 SCHOOLS AND PRACTICES FROM BEING REPLICATED AND EXPANDED
20 ACROSS COLORADO AND WHAT POLICY CHANGES ARE NECESSARY TO
21 REMOVE THOSE BARRIERS WITHIN EXISTING RESOURCES;

22 (e) STATES AND NEW APPROACHES TO SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLING
23 THAT HAVE DEMONSTRATED PROMISE AND SUSTAINED PROGRESS IN
24 CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS AND WHAT POLICIES AND PRACTICES HAVE
25 ENABLED THEM TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS; AND

26 (f) HOW COLORADO CAN REDESIGN ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM TO
27 BETTER SUPPORT INNOVATION, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, AND

1 FUTURE-READY LEARNING MODELS WHILE MAINTAINING ACCOUNTABILITY
2 FOR ACADEMIC OUTCOMES.

3 (11)(a) THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS THAT THE COST
4 OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS SECTION IS FUNDED ENTIRELY BY GIFTS,
5 GRANTS, AND DONATIONS AND THAT FURTHER GIFTS, GRANTS, AND
6 DONATIONS CONTINUE THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THE STUDY. THE
7 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL NOT APPROPRIATE MONEY FROM THE GENERAL
8 FUND FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS SECTION.

9 (b) THE DEPARTMENT MAY ACCEPT AND EXPEND GIFTS, GRANTS,
10 OR DONATIONS FROM PRIVATE OR PUBLIC SOURCES TO IMPLEMENT THIS
11 SECTION. THE TASK FORCE SHALL NOT IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION UNLESS
12 THE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES AN AMOUNT OF GIFTS, GRANTS, AND
13 DONATIONS THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, OR THEIR DESIGNEE,
14 DEEMS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION. WITHIN THIRTY DAYS
15 AFTER RECEIPT OF A GIFT, GRANT, OR DONATION, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL
16 POST ON ITS WEBSITE THE SOURCE AND AMOUNT OF THE GIFT, GRANT, OR
17 DONATION RECEIVED IN SUPPORT OF THE TASK FORCE.

18 (c) THE STUDY AND WRITTEN REPORT DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTIONS
19 (10) AND (12) OF THIS SECTION ARE CONTINGENT ON MONEY BEING
20 AVAILABLE TO CARRY OUT THE STUDY AND THE WRITTEN REPORT. IF
21 MONEY IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR THE TASK FORCE OR FOR THE THIRD-PARTY
22 ENTITY DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (8) OF THIS SECTION TO CARRY OUT THE
23 DUTIES REQUIRED PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION, THE TASK FORCE OR THE
24 ENTITY IS NOT REQUIRED TO CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES. A CONTRACT WITH A
25 THIRD-PARTY ENTITY CONTRACTED WITH PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (8)
26 OF THIS SECTION THAT PROVIDES SERVICES RELATED TO FACILITATION AND
27 THE STUDY AND WRITTEN REPORT IS CONTINGENT ON GIFTS, GRANTS, AND

1 DONATIONS BEING AVAILABLE FOR THAT PURPOSE.

2 (12) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2027, THE TASK FORCE SHALL
3 SUBMIT A WRITTEN REPORT WITH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO
4 THE EDUCATION COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND
5 THE SENATE, OR THEIR SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES; THE GOVERNOR; THE
6 STATE BOARD; THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION; AND THE DEPARTMENT.
7 THE WRITTEN REPORT MUST INCLUDE A MINORITY REPORT IF ONE IS
8 REQUESTED BY A MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE.

9 (13) THIS SECTION IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2027.

10 **SECTION 3. Safety clause.** The general assembly finds,
11 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
12 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for
13 the support and maintenance of the departments of the state and state
14 institutions.