



Dan Snowberger
Superintendent of Schools

January 31st, 2018

To the members of the Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee:

I am writing to urge you to support SB 18-004, to provide full-day kindergarten to all of Colorado's kids. My name is Dan Snowberger, Superintendent of Schools in Durango, CO.

I applaud the efforts of Senator Kerr and other sponsors of this bill. I also applaud the efforts of the legislature back in 2008 when it began to address this issue and where we have stalled on .58% funding for current kindergarten students. It's important to note that 77% of kindergartners across the nation are in full-day programs. Western states however, are lagging behind as only 57% of our schools in the west serve kindergartners on a full-day basis. It's clear that research from all sides of the political spectrum recognize the investment in children in our K-12 system. For every dollar we spend educating a kindergartener, we potentially save \$7-10 as they progress through school and encounter challenges along the way. Certainly, we all know the value of early childhood education, not only kindergarten but preschool as well, and we appreciate the legislature's support in the past at addressing those needs.

I am a product of half-day kindergarten. If that alone doesn't spur you onto action, I will just recollect on the fact that when I was a kindergartener, I was fortunate to have a mom who stayed at home and could engage me in fun learning activities beyond the school day. Though I currently support this reality for kids who are fortunate enough to have a parent at home, the sad reality of our society today is that few parents have that option. While our students from poverty greatly benefit from full-day kindergarten, so many of our families have very few other options.

I'm proud of Durango because we have served full-day kindergarten students at no cost to families for over 20 years - probably the longest running school district providing that service in the state. While only 1-in-3 of our children come from poverty, we have parents from all walks of life who stand strongly behind the full-day program and have led our district to prioritize this service within our already stretched budget.

With funding being a hot topic in the state, I recognize that our legislature faces many fiscal challenges in allocating limited resources across the state spectrum of services. There is no doubt that engaging 5 year olds in a full-day program would have great benefit on a variety of areas even beyond K-12. I believe that this initiative will lead to positive outcomes with voters beyond passage of the bill as the research is neither Republican nor Democrat, liberal or conservative. It is clear that our children warrant the investment and this is a positive step in addressing many critical needs in our district.

Our district alone spends \$1.4 million more to provide full-day kindergarten than we bring in in revenue. That's just the reality for many districts who have made the decision to prioritize this service. We recognize that it's a choice we make, but its an important one that we make for our children. Living in a mountain town is expensive due to the cost of living. So even our families that aren't from poverty, the 2-out-of-3 who come from homes that might be able to afford it in a typical setting, are finding themselves stretched financially in our economy.

We continue to work hard at closing our achievement gaps and we are proud that we have done so. We believe very strongly that is because of our full-day kindergarten program here in the district. I encourage you to continue to support this effort and provide all Senators on the floor of the Senate an opportunity to vote on this bill.

Sincerely,

Dan Snowberger
Superintendent

Office of the Superintendent

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