



To: Representative James Coleman, Senator Jeff Bridges, Chair Barbara McLachlan, and members of the House Education Committee:  
From: Karen Smith, MAed, MAEECD, President, Colorado School Counselor Association  
Date: March 14, 2019  
Re: Support of HB19-1187 Increase Student Aid Application Completion Rates

The Colorado School Counselor Association (CSCA) would like to submit this letter of support for HB19-1187 and thank Rep. Coleman and Sen. Bridges for bringing this bill forward. Due to inclement weather and the bomb cyclone that hit Denver yesterday, CSCA planned to testify in support of the bill the individuals are unable to attend the hearing in person in Denver today.

In 2008 at its inception and still today, the purpose of the School Counselor Corp Grant Program (Counselor Corp) was to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling and to increase the level of school counseling services provided to improve the graduation rate and increase the percentage of students who appropriately prepare for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. The competitor grant program provides four years of grant funding provided allocations are available from the Colorado General Assembly. Currently, public schools across the state have received Counselor Corp funding for additional school counselors through this program, which in turn has provided students' access to counselors, increased graduation and concurrent enrollment participation rates, and decreased dropout rates. Most important to the bill before you today is that Counselor Corp funded schools increased their FAFSA completion rate by over 4 percentage points and had a completion rate of 57%--7% higher than the state rate of FAFSA completion.

Counselor Corps grants are targeted to our highest need schools. In particular secondary schools at which the dropout rate exceeds the statewide average, the percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch exceeding the statewide average, and where postsecondary remediation rates that exceed the statewide average. Studies show that student access to a school counselor with a ratio of 250:1 have a greater success in matriculating to post-secondary education. Throughout the history of Counselor Corp data and reports, grantees noted that access to in some cases and decreased student-to-counselor ratios in others afforded schools additional opportunities to develop systems and supports that enable them to provide more comprehensive, quality, and individualized postsecondary readiness support services. If only all the students in Colorado could have access to a school counselor in this same capacity!

CSCA applauds the effort to add \$250,000 under HB 19-1187 directed at programs relating to completion of FAFSA and state financial aid. Counselor Corp is an already successful program targeting the right students, which makes it the perfect avenue to ensure we are reaching those families and students who would most benefit from additional resources proposed in this bill. Paying for college is often one of the leading financial worries for students and their parents. College costs should not serve as a deterrent to going to college. A college degree is always in demand and still pays dividends over a lifetime, opening doors to individual success. This additional funding will also help all students and their families understand the financial aid package information delivered by colleges and universities.