

Thank you Madam Chair, Mister Vice Chair and members of the Education committee for the opportunity to write in support of SB23-008:

I am Autumn Brooks, volunteer lobbyist with CCSD. CCSD is in support of SB23-008. CCSD hopes this body also sees the value of SB23-008 and will do the same. Colorado's youth have more than proven they deserve to have their voices heard.

A tremendous example, the Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC). In 2022 they took on the current mental health crisis in our youth with HB22-1052. They also addressed the decades-long need for our Colorado's foster to have better access to postsecondary pathways with SB22-008. This year COYAC is attempting to address Substance Use in Secondary School students with HB23-1009; Disciplinary issues in public schools with SB23-029; and Disorder eating prevention, awareness and care with SB23-014. Many of which have been a problem plaguing our state for a long time.

Colorado's youth have proven they are ready to discuss the hard issues. They are willing to do the leg work. They are eager to put in the time and effort to assist in molding and creating a better Colorado for us all.

Who better to assist in deciding the standards of our youth and how they learn than our youth. Just about everyone here remembers how difficult it was to learn this aspect or that in the education system we were familiar with. Thinking back on how education has changed over the years, how many times has your head spun?

Doesn't it stand to reason that including our youth in the discussion of how they learn is a no brainer.

Where they are learning from us we too, should be learning from them. SB23-008 will ensure that we are.

SB23-008, Youth Involvement Education Standards Review is a good bill. CCSD encourages a yes vote on SB23-008

Good afternoon Madam Chair McLachlan and members of the Committee; thank you for your consideration. My name is Mariah Guerrero, and I am in support of SB23-008. I urge a yes vote. I represent Young Invincibles, an organization committed to uplifting young adult voices. Through storytelling, we watch young adults embrace their lived experiences and convert them into transformative sources of political power. We witness young adults grow from feeling excluded in the political process to empowered leaders that are inspired to make an impact.

Through my work with YI, I became empowered to urge the Jeffco Board of Education to reconsider the sweeping decision of consolidating sixteen elementary schools, including Green Mountain Elementary, where my ten-year-old brother, Zayn, attends. I'm not only a family member of a current student; I am a former Green Mountain student myself. Green Mountain Elementary has provided more than foundational education but also a safe space and encouragement for students to thrive. Unfortunately, on November 10th, the Jeffco Board of Education voted to close Green Mountain and fifteen additional schools at the end of this school year.

We are in an unprecedented time where our kids are craving greater consistency and support to thrive and recover from the uncertainty they have faced in recent years. They have lived through a global pandemic, a public reckoning with racial injustice, and rising gun violence in schools. Unsurprisingly, our kids are experiencing a surge in mental health problems. As an older sister, it hurts to see the cumulative impact of these experiences on my brother, Zayn. He has always been anxious, but recently, I have seen his stress worsen with the forthcoming closure of his school.

Although Jeffco Public Schools hosted community listening sessions before the final hearing, few, if any, young voices were present in these conversations. I was consistently the youngest voice in the room. As we discussed budget deficits, property values, and population trends, the most important voices and concerns- those of our students- remained absent. Although we, as loved ones and community members, could advocate, we could not fully

represent the voices and experiences of those who sit in the classroom eight hours a day and who would be most impacted by this devastating disruption in their academic careers.

Students have responded to the impending closure in various ways. As mentioned, Zayn has become increasingly anxious and stressed. Because of his growing mental health struggles, he now attends weekly counseling sessions where he often conveys his fear and anxiety through art. Others in his class have lashed out against teachers in frustration and are now bullying classmates. At recess, some students have expressed fears of losing their homes or being unable to pay the bills since their parents, employees of the school, will soon lose their jobs. Our students should not voice their concerns amongst themselves on the playground or at the cafeteria table. Instead, they deserve a seat at the table as key stakeholders where decisions about their education and futures are being made.

Thank you Senator Moreno and Representative Lindsay, for uplifting the need and importance of young voices like mine and Zayn's. At all levels of decision-making, from school boards to the State Capitol, young people deserve to take up space and be considered in the decision-making process. Young people are the future, tomorrow's decision-makers- but we need to be in the room. Today, I encourage you to extend a seat to young people so that they may have meaningful opportunities for involvement regarding their education and their futures, by voting YES on Senate Bill 23-008. Thank you for your consideration.

Mariah Guerrero

mariah.guerrero@younginvincibles.org

720-609-4040