

House Education  
 04/27/2023 Upon Adjournment  
 SB23-287 Public School Finance  
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Amie Baca-Oehlert            For            Colorado Education            Association</p>	<p>4/27- Testimony on SB 287</p> <p>Good Afternoon, Madam Chair and Honorable Members of the Committee. My name is Amie Baca-Oehlert. I am a high school counselor and President of the Colorado Education Association representing 39,000 educators across the state of Colorado. I am here today asking in support of SB 23-287.</p> <p>First, I would like to thank Representative McLachlan and Representative Kipp for their commitment to funding Colorado schools. Over the past few months, thousands of Colorado educators have signed petitions, called and emailed their elected officials, talked to legislators at the Capitol, and shared what an underfunded education system has meant for them and their students. The School Finance Act shows that our legislators listened.</p> <p>The 2023-2024 School Finance Act buys down the B.S. Factor by \$180 million – a figure that is more than four times the estimate outlined in Governor Polis’ initial budget proposal. This is a monumental victory for Colorado educators, students, and communities and a critical infusion of funding for our public schools.</p> <p>CEA also strongly supports the \$30 million of additional funding for rural schools and looks forward to participating in the task force to study the modernization of the School Finance Act. We also believe that the adequacy study, tasked with determining how much funding is needed to provide all Colorado students with an exemplar education, is absolutely vital in understanding what long term fixes are needed to ensure Colorado has a world class public education system.</p> <p>While CEA believes these investments will go a long way to providing needed funding for our education system, we know that our schools have been underfunded since the Great Recession to the tune of \$10 billion. In order to create the public education system that our students need and deserve, we need a far larger, more far-reaching fix. We look forward to working together towards that fix. Thank you again to the sponsors and we ask that you please vote yes on SB 23-287.</p>

Dear members of the House Judiciary committee.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony today. My name is Vallerie Bustamante, I am the Digital Organizing Manager at Stand for Children, and I am also a DPS alumna and most importantly a mom to a soon to be 1 year old.

Today I come to ask for your support on SB23-287, so that we can continue to improve the outcomes of our Colorado students through the right investing practices in our public schools listed out in this bill.

Growing up in DPS schools, there were many incidents where lack of funding caused me and my peers to not get the full high-quality education we deserved. I went to a high school where they offered only one AP class, which was AP US History, and we didn't have a teacher to guide us through the lectures and curriculum. We were sent to the school library with the textbook and a packet of questions and were expected to learn and absorb the key events in our history to pass the AP exam and get college credit, which none of us did. Like many other students in DPS, my first language was not English and there were plenty of times where a para or an ELA teacher were not able to be hired due to lack of funding. These are two out of a multitude of times where the school funding formula obviously did not work out for me, a Latina, first generation student, and others like me.

If this is what an experience in our public school in an urban area looks like, I can't imagine the hardships rural public schools go through. But this bill tackles the funding challenges rural schools typically face by distributing \$30 million to them.

6 years later, I am now a mom to a baby girl who I hope gets the best out of her education once she is old enough to enter our school system and the progressive aspects shown in this bill give me hope that we are heading in that direction. It is extremely evident that when we invest in our children, the future is brighter and more innovative, so if you vote yes to SB23-287 you would give our students the opportunity to be creators of that bright future through the provision that would require the State to fully fund K-12 schools starting in 2024-25.

There are other notable changes that would be made to the funding formula in this bill, like the task force that will be created to recommend specific changes to the formula and the universal screening to identify gifted children which will help educators make more equitable program placement decisions.

Again, I ask you to vote yes on SB23-287 so that we can continue to make improving changes with how we invest in our state's future!