

To: Colorado Legislative Council Staff

From: Brian Ewert, Superintendent, Littleton Public Schools  
Co-Chair, CASE Legislative Committee

Grant Schmidt, PhD, Superintendent, Hanover School District 28  
Co-Chair, CASE Legislative Committee

Date: October 2, 2019

RE: Public Comment to the Interim Committee on School Finance

The currently available form that the Committee has published seeking public comment asks, in part, that respondents sort and rank selected factors and categoricals by need for change or desire for improvement. We believe this is a flawed and prejudicial approach. To suggest there can be a priority of improving at-risk funding, for example, over improving special education funding is unproductive and insensitive to the students these targeted funds support.

Colorado superintendents previously proposed a student-centric school finance formula that aspires to provide all 178 school districts with increased funding for all students, while at the same time establishes a more equitable distribution of funding for students who are traditionally underserved and/or face the greatest challenges in meeting Colorado's expectations for postsecondary and workforce readiness. The formula also proposed a different approach, isolating each factor rather than the complicated multiplicative approach in the current formula. This approach still represents the views of Colorado's superintendents and is grounded in quality research.

Our proposal notwithstanding, the most important component to a new school funding formula is additional revenue. Without additional revenue, adjustments within the current formula or implementation of a new formula will inevitably result in creating winners and losers among districts that are already functioning in a grossly underfunded system.

Colorado superintendents have spoken on our vision for the redesign of the school finance formula in a proposal that had the support of 174 superintendents across the state and thereby ask the Interim Committee on School Finance to:

1. Revisit in detail the work of Colorado superintendents as a research-based model for a more adequate and equitable formula.
2. Support the notion that additional revenue is a prerequisite to adjusting the current formula or implementing a new formula, and that taking resources from one underfunded factor or categorical to bolster another underfunded factor or categorical is a poor strategy.

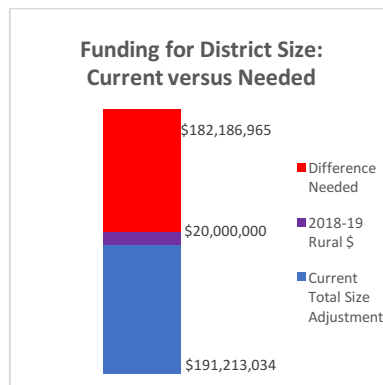
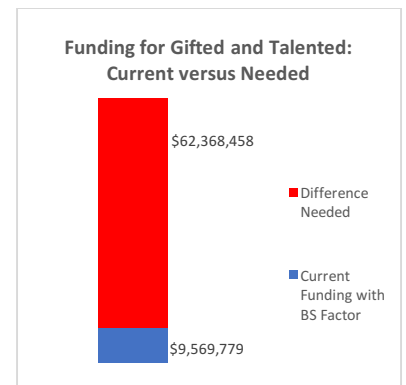
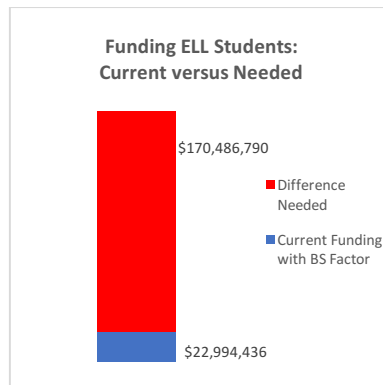
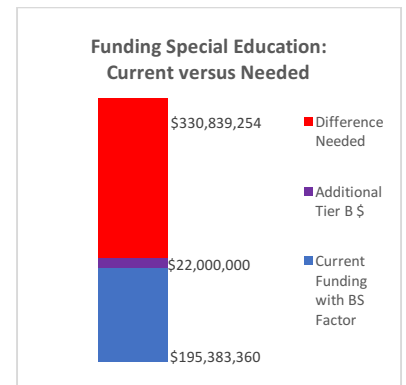
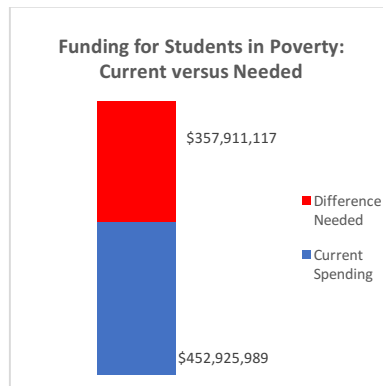
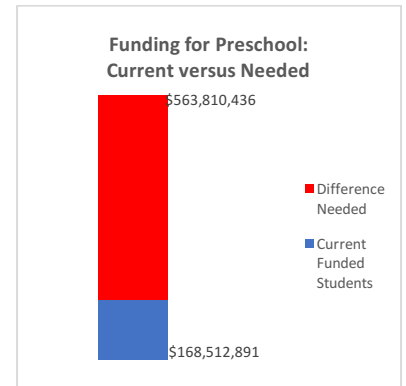
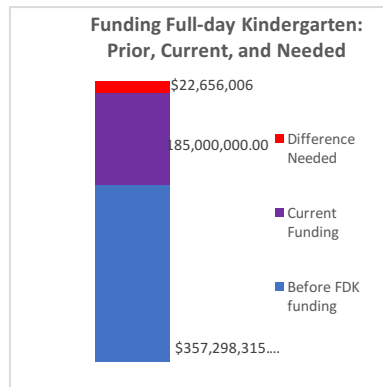
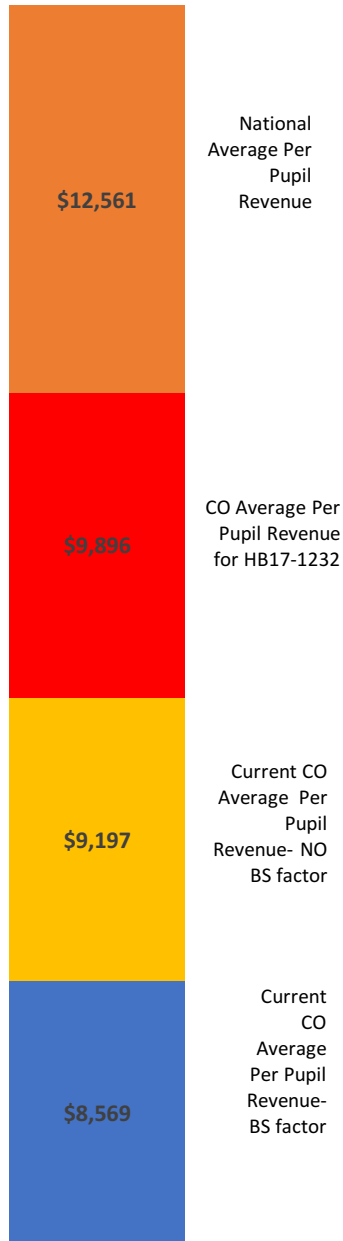
3. Review supporting documents attached to this response:
  - a. Data showing progress Colorado has made toward the goals identified by superintendents and the deficits we still face to achieve adequacy and equity as defined by superintendents.
  - b. An illustration of the superintendents' priority that all actions regarding school finance must acknowledge and improve funding in three key areas: adequacy, equity, and opportunity gaps.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments to the Committee. We look forward to the opportunity to work directly with you by sharing our research-based consensus approach to improving the school finance formula.

# Where is Colorado after 2019 Legislative Session?

A look at progress toward equitable and more adequate school funding.

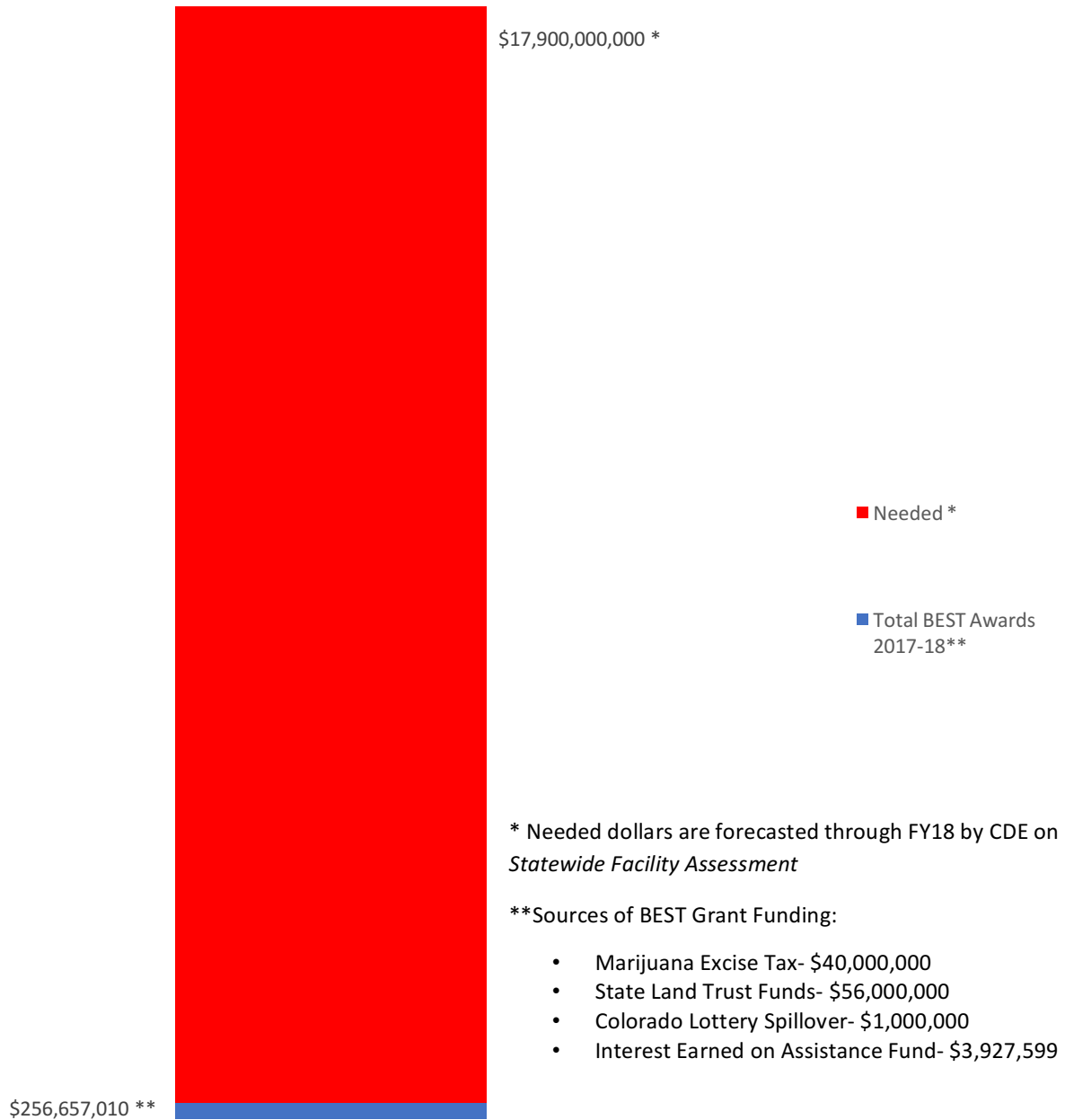
## Total Per Pupil Funding Differences



#### Notes:

- Enrollment data from CDE 2019-20
- National comparisons from the US Census Bureau
- Poverty are students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch program
- Colorado revenue is reflective of local property tax, specific ownership tax, and state sales tax and state income tax. Revenue calculations exclude individual district grants and federal dollars
- Budget Stabilization Factor/Negative Factor – a mechanism created by the general assembly to remove dollars beginning in the great recession from K-12. The current dollars owed is \$572 million. The cumulative last year to date is \$8.1 billion
- HB18-1232 – school finance legislation that was introduced that had the support of over 170 of the school districts in the state – reflecting the principles of adequacy, equity, sustainability and adaptability.

## Funding for Capital: Current versus Needed



# COLORADO SUPERINTENDENTS' School Finance Legislative Values



## COLORADO RANKS LAST IN THE NATION ON PROVIDING TEACHERS A COMPETITIVE WAGE

Teacher compensation vs. professions with similar education

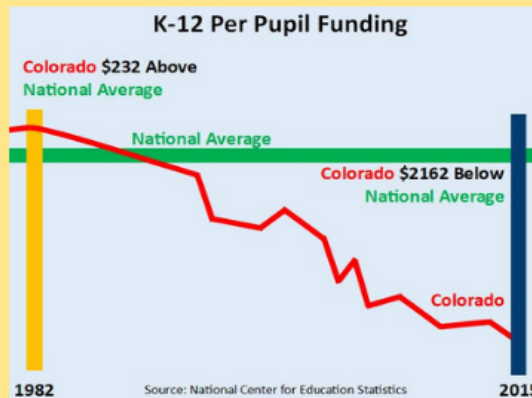


**3000** unfilled teaching positions



**95%**

of Colorado's rural teachers have salaries that do not meet the cost of living in their own community



**16%**

reduction in people entering Colorado educator preparation programs between 2013-2017

## QUALITY SCHOOL FUNDING MUST CHECK ALL THESE BOXES

### ADEQUACY



Adequate school funding includes annual Amendment 23 increases for inflation and pupil growth as well as



Significant buy-down of the **Budget Stabilization Factor**

### EQUITY



An equitable school finance act recognizes the unique learning needs of **Each Student**



Including students who are impacted or advanced by factors such as **Poverty, Disability, English as a Second Language, and Gifted and Talented**



Access for all students to **Full Day Kindergarten**

### OPPORTUNITY GAPS



Superintendents understand that there are also issues of district adequacy and equity to be considered

**A QUALITY EDUCATION SHOULD NOT DEPEND ON ZIP CODE**