

February 10, 2014

To: The Honorable John W. Hickenlooper, Governor of Colorado  
The Honorable Morgan Carroll, President of the Colorado Senate  
The Honorable Mark Ferrandino, Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives  
The Honorable Crisanta Duran, Chair, Joint Budget Committee  
The Honorable Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, House Majority Leader  
The Honorable Brian Del Grosso, House Minority Leader  
The Honorable Rollie Heath, Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Bill Cadman, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Andy Kerr, Chair, Senate Education Committee  
The Honorable Millie Hamner, Chair, House Education Committee  
The Honorable State Senators and State Representatives, State of Colorado

Dear Governor Hickenlooper and Members of the General Assembly:

We represent Colorado school districts serving more than 99 percent of the public school students in our state and 168 of 178 school districts. As such, we also represent hundreds of thousands of families, as well as communities, businesses and a broad range of state and local economic interests.

As superintendents, we have prepared this letter to urgently communicate our shared concerns regarding the extreme state of inadequate funding for Colorado's public schools.

#### BACKGROUND

As you know, beginning in 2009, funding for Colorado's public schools has fallen by more than \$1 billion. At the same time, the Colorado legislature has implemented significant reforms, including new state standards and assessments that rely on substantial school district investments in expanded technology, infrastructure and equipment; and a new annual principal and teacher evaluation system which requires ongoing investment in professional development and increased personnel to realize the intent of the legislation. It is essential that we provide sufficient funding for the implementation of all school reform measures if they are to be successful.

The dramatic funding cuts forced painful reductions that have resulted in increased class size, reduced services for children, and deferred investment in critical infrastructure needs including safety and security systems.

While we have done everything we can to support students through these budget reductions, we know the lack of funding has had a negative impact on the education of Colorado students, especially children at risk of making adequate educational progress. Students have also been, and still are, impacted by inadequate funding for educational opportunities provided through small group instruction and interventions, additional learning time, advanced technology, high-rigor instructional programs such as STEM, International Baccalaureate, world languages, and postsecondary career and technical training programs students need to be successful in college and careers.

We recognize Colorado has endured fiscal challenges unprecedented in the modern era. We also

understand that during the financial crisis faced by Colorado during the last five years, the legislature had a duty to maintain all parts of the public sector. However, the worst of that crisis has now passed and the state economy is recovering. Colorado must now begin to restore funding for public education, like other states across the nation are currently doing.

In the current legislative session, state leaders are proposing initiatives to revise Colorado's annual student count practices and require new financial reporting practices. From our perspective, the need and value of these changes is unproven and will result in an unnecessary burden beyond the pressing needs of students and schools, and diversion of critically needed funds.

#### PROPOSAL

We propose the legislature restore \$275 million of recurring funds to public schools, in addition to the governor's proposed increase. A significant portion of the \$275 million should be used to reduce the "negative factor". The negative factor was the mechanism used to reduce funding allocated to public schools; we believe it is the mechanism that should be used to restore funding. A portion of the \$275 million allocation should be directed to students with significant risks of not making adequate educational progress. The total amount of money directed to students at risk and the specific allocation process should be determined through a welcomed dialog between superintendents, lawmakers and others.

We believe the vast majority of Colorado families will embrace the restoration of funding for their children and schools. During the recent recession, communities across the state passed no fewer than 82 local ballot initiatives totaling nearly \$1.25 billion in operational and capital funding support. This represents a resounding demonstration of confidence in local control by locally elected school boards to manage and maximize resources provided through their tax dollars to meet the needs of their unique communities. We also recognize some school districts were not able to consider local ballot initiatives which contribute to greater inequity between school districts.

Allowing boards of education to allocate funding in the local communities will serve all students' needs, help narrow achievement gaps, and address mental health, emotional, physical and learning needs of all students.

As superintendents, we have a moral and ethical duty to advocate for the children we serve and the overall economic well-being of our communities. To do otherwise risks the failure of Colorado's education system resulting in lost opportunities for students. This is unacceptable.

In closing, we believe it is time to begin restoring K-12 funding to pre-recession levels. To this end, we request the opportunity to meet with our state's executive and legislative leadership to share our knowledge and experience about meaningful education policy and address the pressing needs of Colorado's students and schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Hatchell, Academy District 20  
Chris Gdowski, Adams 12 Five Star Schools  
Pat Sanchez, Adams County School District 14

Pamela Swanson, Adams County School District 50  
Kendra Ewing, Agate School District  
Stacy Houser, Aguilar School District  
Brian Christensen, Akron School District  
Robert Alejo, Alamosa School District  
Linda Reed, Archuleta School District  
Les Lindauer, Arickaree School District  
Tom Arensdorf, Arriba-Flagler School District  
John Maloy, Aspen School District  
Rico Munn, Aurora Public Schools  
Troy Zabel, Bayfield School District  
Dennis Veal, Bennett School District  
Shila Adolf, Bethune School District  
Steve Wilson, Big Sandy School District  
Bruce Messinger, Boulder Valley School District  
Chris Fiedler, Brighton 27J School District  
Michelle Johnstone, Brush School District  
Robert Crowther, Buena Vista School District  
Tom Satterly, Burlington School District  
Tom Turrell, Byers School District  
Linda Miller, Calhan School District  
Nikki Johnson, Campo School District  
Robin Gooldy, Canon City Schools  
Brian Crowther, Centennial School District  
George Welsh, Center School District  
Rick Lovato, Cheraw School District  
Harry Bull, Cherry Creek Schools  
Walt Cooper, Cheyenne Mountain School District  
Glen Bradshaw, Cheyenne Wells School District  
Todd Lancaster, Clear Creek School District  
Nicholas Gledich, Colorado Springs School District 11  
Randy Bohlander, Cotopaxi School District  
Buck Stroh, Creed School District  
Sue Holmes, Cripple Creek School District  
Scott Cuckow, Crowley School District  
Chris Selle, Custer School District  
Alan Dillon, De Beque School District  
Robin Purdy, Deer Trail School District  
Nathan Smith, Del Norte School District  
Caryn Gibson, Delta County School District  
Tom Boasburg, Denver Public Schools  
Bruce Haskins, Dolores County Re-2J School District  
Scott Cooper, Dolores School District  
Liz Fagan, Douglas County School District  
Dan Snowberger, Durango School District 9-R  
Glenn Smith, Eads School District

Jason Glass, Eagle County Schools  
Jody Mimmack, East Grand School District  
Carol Noll, East Otero School District  
Randy Miller, Eaton School District  
Pat Bershinsky, Edison School District 54JT  
Kelli Loflin, Elbert School District 200  
Douglas Bissonette, Elizabeth School District  
Pat Cullen, Ellicott School District  
Brian Ewert, Englewood Schools  
Patrick Hickey, Estes Park School District  
Peter Hilts, Falcon School District 49  
Jim Copeland, Fleming School District  
Cheryl Serrano, Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8  
Steven Grasmick, Fowler School District  
Rhonda Vendetti, Freemont Re-2 School District  
Ken Haptonstall, Garfield County School District  
Susan Birdsey, Garfield School District Re-2  
Frank Reeves, Genoa Hugo School District  
David MacKenzie, Gilpin County School District  
Leo Laprarie, Granada School District  
Ranelle Lang, Greeley-Evans School District 6  
Doug Tredway, Gunnison Watershed School District  
Paul McCarty, Hanover School District  
Andre Spencer, Harrison School District Two  
Darcy Garretson, Haxtun School District  
Steve McCracken, Hi-Plains School District  
Robert Ring, Highland School District  
Carlyn Yokum, Holly School District  
Bret Miles, Holyoke School District  
Dawn Olson, Huerfano School District  
Tim Krause, Idalia School District  
Rocco Fuschetto, Ignacio School District  
Cindy Stevenson, JeffCo Public Schools  
Shawn Ehnes, Julesburg School District  
Todd Werner, Karval School District  
Monica Johnson, Kim School District  
Denise Pearson, Kiowa School District  
Jason Westfall, Kiowa School District  
BrendaSmith, Kit Carson School District  
Bree Lessar, La Veta School District  
Leslie Nichols, Lake City School District  
WendyWyman, Lake County School District R-1  
Dave Tecklenburg, Lamar School District  
Jerry Nickell, Las Animas School District  
Ted Bauman, Lewis-Palmer School District  
John McCleary, Liberty School District

Dave Marx, Limon School District  
Scott Murphy, Littleton Public Schools  
Susan Sonnenberg, Lone Star School District  
Brian Hanson, Mancos School District  
Ed Longfield, Manitou Springs School District  
Steve Sanchez, Manzanola School District  
Charlotte Ciano, Mapleton Public Schools  
Terry Weber, McClave School District  
Mark Meyer, Meeker School District  
Rob Sanders, Merino RE-4J School District  
Steve Schultz, Mesa County Valley School District 51  
Rick Walter, Miami Yoder School District  
Joe Petrone, Moffat County School District Re-1  
Kirt Banghart, Moffat School District  
Robert Webb, Monte Vista School District  
Alex Carter, Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1  
Mark MacHale, Montrose & Olathe Schools  
Ron Echols, Morgan County School District Re-3  
Corey Doss, Mountain Valley School District  
Kevin Schott, North Conejos School District  
Jim Anderson, North Park School District  
David Crews, Norwood School District  
Mike Warren, Otis School District  
Scott Pankow, Ouray School District  
Tim Kistler, Peyton School District  
John Kaufman, Plainview School District  
Greg Randall, Plateau Valley School District  
Jim Walpole, Platte Canyon School District  
Sharon Green, Platte Valley School District RE-3  
Glenn McClain, Platte Valley School District RE-7  
Sandra Smyser, Poudre School District  
Jeff Bollinger, Primero RE-2 School District  
Maggie Lopez, Pueblo City Schools  
Ed Smith, Pueblo County School District 70  
Mathew Scoggins, Rangle School District  
Jan Delay, RE-1 Valley School District  
Cheryl Gomez, Ridgway School District  
Diana Sirko, Roaring Fork School District  
Kermit Snyder, Rocky Ford School District  
Darryl Webb, Salida School District  
Kevin Edgar, Sanford School District  
Brady Stagner, Sangre de Cristo School District  
Steven Marantino, Sargent School District  
Michael Clough, Sheridan School District  
Darren Edgar, Sierra Grande School District  
Kim White, Silverton School District

Michael Moore, South Conjeos School District  
Scott Mader, South Routt School District  
Mike Page, Springfield School District  
Don Haddad, St Vrain Valley School District  
Brad Meeks, Steamboat Springs School District  
Ed Vandertook, Strasburg School District  
Jeff Durbin, Stratton School District  
Heidi Pace, Summit School District  
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Stan Sheer, Thompson School District  
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Martin Foster, Weld County Re-5J School District  
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Jo Barbie, Weld County School District RE-1  
Greg Rabenhorst, Weld County School District RE-3J/Keenesburg  
Karen Trusler, Weld RE-4 Windsor/Severance School District  
Doug Pfau, Weldon Valley School District  
Tom Taucher, West End Public Schools  
Terry Vanderpan, West Grand School District  
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Gary Bruntz, Wiggins School District  
Dave Eastin, Wiley School District  
Jed Bowman, Woodland Park School District  
Rose Cronk, Woodlin School District  
Robert Stannard, Yuma School District