

Ways to Contact Legislators	Legislature's website	Text	Emails	Social media	Phone calls	Town halls	Face-to-face meeting
Ways to Participate	Learn the process	View livestream of hearing or floor session	Attend committee hearing/floor session	Committee testimony	Contact your legislator		

## Talking Points

- **MOST IMPORTANT: SHARE YOUR PERSONAL STORY** about what the cuts will mean to your school district. Of all the things you say to your legislators, your personal story will carry the most weight and will likely be the one thing they remember. Don't be shy; share what you feel.
- **INVESTMENT IN SCHOOLS IS AN INVESTMENT IN OUR STATE'S INFRASTRUCTURE:** Strong public schools serve as catalysts for successful communities and provide the bedrock to our democracy.
  - They **stabilize and sustain our local communities**<sup>1</sup> by employing essential personnel, serving as emergency feeding centers, offering childcare, bridging the digital divide, and providing vital services to our most vulnerable families.
  - Schools are an **economic driver for our economy**
    - School districts are often a region's largest employer
    - Return on investment in education has a multiplier effect<sup>2</sup>
  - Colorado schools **educate more than 900,000 Colorado youth.**
  - They **prepare Colorado's workforce.**
  - Our schools are the **cornerstone of our democracy.**
- **COLORADO SCHOOLS ARE DOING MORE TODAY THAN EVER:** Schools are central to a community's health and provide a safety net, in partnership with other local organizations, providing food, housing, mental health supports, and more. When schools are not supported, the fiber of society starts unraveling.
- **COLORADO SCHOOLS ARE FACING DEVASTATING BUDGET CUTS WITHOUT FULLY RECOVERING FROM PRIOR CUTS:** It took 11 years for general fund revenues to recover to pre-recession levels in 2008.<sup>3</sup> The state share for education funding never recovered and there is a current-year shortfall of \$572 million.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The economy can't reopen without schools](#)

<sup>2</sup> [What if Colorado Schools were number 1?](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Colorado Legislative Council Staff Memo](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Budget Stabilization Factor totals](#)

- **CUTS TO SCHOOLS WILL HURT KIDS AND FAMILIES:** Further cuts in state share to schools will result in layoffs, lost programs, and Colorado falling further behind.
  - Mental health issues and teen suicide rates are growing — Colorado ranks as the sixth worst state for teen suicides<sup>5</sup>
  - Colorado teacher pay is least competitive in the nation<sup>6</sup>
  - Achievement & opportunity gaps are growing and among the largest in the U.S.<sup>7</sup>
  - An unacceptable digital divide exists when trying to deliver remote learning<sup>8</sup>
    - Approximately 53,000 students need wifi-enabled devices
    - Approximately 65,860 children need Internet access at home
  - 60% of districts have transitioned to one or more schools on a four-day week<sup>9</sup>
  
- **COLORADO SCHOOLS WILL REQUIRE MORE REVENUE — NOT LESS — TO REOPEN SCHOOLS:** The types of precautions being described to address the COVID-19 preparations for the next school year include:
  - Staggered schedules, health screenings, smaller groups at schools with some kids who are more prepared to work from home
  - Catch up learning opportunities for students who show evidence of large academic slide.
  - Need to be flexible with both in-school and at-home learning plans, including digital device access, in case of second wave of COVID-19
  - PPE and supplies: non-latex gloves, non-touch thermometers, masks, gowns and eye protection
  - Mental health supports
  - Teacher supports and professional development
  - Increase cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing costs
  - Care for students with chronic conditions
  - Replenish use of one-time funds to address COVID-19 unplanned costs
  - Purchasing more devices
  - Additional insurance on devices
  - Higher transportation costs if running staggered schedules
  
- **PAST SOLUTIONS TO STATEWIDE BUDGET SHORTFALLS HAVE LED TO GROWING INEQUITIES ACROSS THE STATE:** When the revenue that can be raised by local school districts through mill levy override elections ranges from \$5,600 per mill to \$20.7 million per mill, looking to local districts to backfill the loss in state share funding is not an equitable solution to a statewide school funding shortfall.<sup>10</sup> In addition, relying on grant programs for schools because of insufficient resources is not an equitable solution.

<sup>5</sup> [The Rate Of Teen Suicide In Colorado Increased By 58% In 3 Years. Making It The Cause Of 1 In 5 Adolescent Deaths](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Some Colorado teachers could earn more waiting tables. Here's how lawmakers hope to change that.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Who are Colorado's School Age Children Without Access to the Internet?](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Colorado School District Needs Inventory](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Colorado leads the nation in four-day school weeks, but are they right for everyone?](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Tax Effort and Fiscal Capacity](#)

- **OUR SCHOOLS [REQUIRE ADEQUATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING IN ORDER TO PROVIDE THE ESSENTIAL SERVICES OUR COMMUNITIES NEED:](#)**
  - **Maximize the revenue that goes into Total Program Funding**
    - Pays for teachers and support staff (85%+ of district budgets)
    - Pays for additional supports for students
  - **Minimize those systems that create burdens on districts — grant programs, testing, accountability, etc.**
  - **Commit to finding a long-term structural solution to our inadequate tax system**
    - Support [Initiative #271 — Fair Tax Colorado](#); or
    - Identify another structural fix with ensuring the health of our state budget

## INFORMATION TO HAVE ON HAND TO ADDRESS QUESTIONS:

**MYTH:** There is a popular view in the public that schools have been able to save money during this time period when education is not taking place in school buildings.

### **FACT**

Unfortunately, this is not true given that the majority of our budget is spent on salaries and benefits for our teachers and staff. We were proud to make the decision to provide our employees with continued employment and economic security which means the majority of those costs have been ongoing. In addition, given the new reality, we expect to incur greater costs as we try to re-open schools in the fall. Some of the things we need to consider are:

- Staggered schedules, health screenings, smaller groups at schools with some kids who are more prepared to work from home.
- Catch up learning opportunities for students who show evidence of large academic slide. We are particularly concerned about our special needs students.
- The need for flexibility with both in-school and at-home learning plans, including digital device access, in the event of a second wave of COVID-19.
- PPE supplies, such as non-latex gloves, non-touch thermometers, masks, gowns, and eye protection will need to be purchased and replaced regularly.
- Mental health supports for students and staff.
- Teacher supports and professional development for a hybrid school / remote teaching model.
- Increase in cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing costs.
- Additional care and precautions for students with chronic conditions.
- Replenishing use of one-time funds to address COVID-19 unplanned costs.
- Purchasing more devices.
- Additional insurance on devices.
- Higher transportation and staffing costs if running staggered schedules.
- Supports for students due to potential increases in mobility, housing instability, food insecurity and more limited access to medical care.

**MYTH:** Coloradans cannot afford to pass a tax initiative now given the recession.

**FACT**

Fortunately, there is a citizen tax initiative that would provide a tax cut to 96% of Coloradans at a critical time, while asking all taxpayers to pay a more equal portion of their income into funding vital state services.

The CASB Board of Directors voted at their March 2020 board meeting to support ballot initiative #271. Initiative #271 also known as Fair Tax Colorado, is a proposed citizen's ballot initiative that would:

- Repeal the constitutional requirement that all taxable net income be taxed at one rate.
- Create a tiered tax structure where:
  - 100% of Coloradans receive a tax cut on the first \$250,000 in taxable income as it lowers the current 4.63 percent tax to 4.58 percent.
  - 96% of Coloradans have less than \$250,000 in taxable income and that means it is a tax cut for them.
  - 50% of revenue raised is dedicated to pre-primary through twelfth grade education.
  - Taxpayers across all income levels will pay a more equal portion of their income in state and local taxes.

CASB Legislative Resolution #28 states: The Colorado Association of School Boards supports current efforts to build a coalition addressing Colorado state funding requirements resulting from TABOR that may result in a future statewide referendum or initiative for a ballot measure amending the Colorado Constitution. This ballot initiative aligns with this resolution.

[Initiative #271 Resources](#)