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School Finance Bill

The release this week of the first draft of Sen. Mike Johnston's 144-page school finance bill has everyone talking – and asking a lot of questions. **Jane Urschel** likens the long and complicated bill to getting something in the mail that you have to assemble, but the instructions aren't in English. [Watch the video below](#) to hear her thoughts about the initial bill, which still has a long way to go and will likely change drastically over the next few weeks.

You can read a draft of the bill on [Sen. Johnston's website](#), as well as provide feedback. A public forum for community input will be held 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Feb. 28, at History Colorado Center. A recent [Ed News Colorado article](#) highlights the key elements of the draft bill.



Jane Urschel Overview of School Finance Bill - Draft 1

from **CASB**

08:46

Highlights from Winter Legislative Conference

Education and legislative love was in the air last week at CASB's winter legislative conference. After asking the 150-plus attendees to be his Valentine, keynote speaker **Sen. Mike Johnston** dug right into laying the framework for his proposed school finance bill - a two-year effort and the culmination of 117 public meetings and involvement from 25 stakeholders.

If approved by the voters in November, the bill would be "the most significant investment in K-12 in the history of the state." He acknowledged the proposed bill does not fix the Gallagher Amendment or TABOR, but said he doesn't want to wait another six years before addressing the school finance issue.

After thanking Sen. Johnston for "tackling a problem no one else under the Gold Dome has done before," Jane facilitated a reactor panel to continue the school finance discussion. **Don Haddad**, superintendent for St. Vrain Valley Re-1J, stressed that in order to win a campaign with voters to ask for money, "leaders cannot stay on the fence ... educating our students is everyone's responsibility." He also noted the need for transparency, adding, "communication is not a spectator sport."

Shila Adolf, superintendent for Bethune Schools, noted the proposed school finance bill and formula should "come with a giant caution label." She asked, "In this short term are we going to look good, but look bad in the long term?" Adolf also stressed the importance of a sustainable plan that clearly outlines how money will be spent and ensures it will be well spent.

Michael Griffith, senior policy analyst for the Education Commission of the States, echoed that sentiment noting we need to look at the next 10 years, not just next year. "This extra money does not change TABOR; it buys you time." He later added, "The public doesn't want to put money into a system without knowing what they're going to get out of it."

Later in the conference, more than two dozen legislators turned out for the leader and legislator lunch, where special guest **Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia** began and ended his speech with praise to school board members for their dedication and countless hours spent tackling oftentimes emotional and contentious issues.

"It's tough work, but I think there is no work more important," he said, later adding, "Remind yourself when you get beat down, that what you do makes a difference."

During the closing general session, attendees had a chance to learn about the Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC) and hear firsthand from some bright young people who are helping influence legislation by testifying on bills and engaging in policy work.

Established in 2008 through a bill sponsored by **Sen. Ellen Roberts**, the COYAC helps legislators understand how to work with young people during the modern age and keep them informed about the important issues facing Colorado youth.

Other breakout sessions during the conference included an update on State Lands Trust and the BEST school construction grant program; a recap from CASB's Federal Relations Network on the committee's recent visit to the National School Boards Association conference in Washington, DC; an educational overview of the current state of school finance and the impact of the negative factor; highlights of the State Board of Education's goals and priorities; and a discussion on the REAL Colorado initiative and legislation and regulations impacting K-12 education.

Several of the handouts from our winter conference are available for download on our [website](#).

Senate Passes Electronic Meeting Participation Bill

Inclement weather, travel schedules or other extenuating circumstances will no longer keep school board members from “attending” school board meetings if the House approves SB 15. The electronic meeting participation bill – which stemmed from CASB’s resolution adopted at the Delegate Assembly – would allow school board members to participate electronically in school board meetings.

Rep. Evie Hudak said she was concerned that a family member who lives in the same household as a school board member participating electronically might overhear “sensitive conversation” during an executive session; however, she also noted that CASB believes school boards will be “responsible and careful” and she supported the bill as amended.

The original draft of the bill prohibited school board members from participating in executive sessions electronically; however, the Senate Education Committee removed this prohibition from the bill after a lengthy debate highlighting local control concerns.

As amended, the bill states that when boards hold organizational meetings to swear in new members and elect officers, board members will be asked to sign an affidavit saying they will uphold the law and maintain the confidentiality of executive sessions whether they participate electronically or in person.

Sen. Ellen Roberts, the bill’s sponsor, said SB 15 is not a replacement for attendance, but allows school boards to use 21st century technology.

Bills at a Glance: Summary and Status of Bills That Affect School Boards

SB 13-139 SUPPLEMENTAL ONLINE EDUCATION SERVICES

Sen. Roberts (R), Rep. Coram (R)

As amended, the BOCES retain oversight over the administration of contracts for online and blended education services. The bill requires that the BOCES’ RFP process be performed in consultation with CDE and appoints a committee to review all responses to the RFP. The BOCES is to issue a new RFP every three years and is required to collect data and report on student completion rates.

Status: Approved by Senate Education Committee

CASB position: Support as amended

HB 13-1171 EMERGENCY USE OF EPINEPHRINE INJECTORS IN SCHOOLS

Sen. Todd (D), Rep. Primavera (D)

The bill allows the governing authority of public and nonpublic schools to adopt a policy to authorize the school nurse or other designated school personnel to administer an epinephrine auto-injector to any student that the school nurse or designated school personnel in good faith believes is experiencing anaphylaxis.

Status: Approved by Public Health Care & Human Services Committee

CASB position: Monitor

HB 13-1219 STATUTORY CHANGES TO K-12 EDUCATION

Sen. Todd (D), Rep. Hamner (D)

The is a CDE “clean up” bill which makes several changes to existing statute concerning K-12 education, including: (i) Directing the commissioner of education to establish and maintain an educator identifier system and to review the content of educator preparation programs; (ii) Authorizing the department of education to collect data from school districts related to student-level course completion; (iii) Changing the student assessment statute to reflect the state’s new summative assessment system as adopted by the general assembly in 2012; (iv) Removing obsolete reporting requirements for the accelerating students through concurrent enrollment (ASCENT) program; (v) Changing the name of the literacy instruction authorization to an adult basic education authorization; (vi) Extending continuous spending authority of the state’s licensure system by one year to allow for continued refinements of the system; (vii) Eliminating the requirement that internet use policies require technology protection measures; and (viii) Limiting the reporting and notice mandate on the department to rules that create a new mandate or an increase in the level of service for an existing state mandate.

Status: Approved by House Education Committee

CASB position: Monitor

[House Education Committee Members & Schedule](#)

[Senate Education Committee Members & Schedule](#)

CASB makes it easy for you to keep track of education bills through our master bills list via [Colorado Capitol Watch](#). Visit the list to learn more about education-related legislation, including the date each bill was introduced and CASB’s position.

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