

# Successful High School Transitions (SB21-106)

Sens. James Coleman, Kevin Priola, Jeff Bridges | Reps. Barbara McLachlan, Mark Baisley

*This legislation will better connect high school students – especially those farthest from opportunity – to high quality pathways to careers and other postsecondary opportunities in Colorado. Specifically, this bill 1) creates greater flexibility around requirements that students learn within the walls of the traditional classroom, allowing a wider range of career and postsecondary opportunities and 2) makes the fourth year of high school more meaningful. Eligible students who complete high school in three years would receive funding to take full-time college courses or participate in career training in their fourth year of high school – saving them time and money. This legislation:*

- **Increases relevancy of high school.** Creating engaging, relevant, and rigorous opportunities that help students stay on track, provide multiple pathways to success, and the ability to expedite graduation is a worthy state investment that benefits students and communities.
- **Addresses High School disengagement/mental health concerns from COVID-19, rated as a top tier concern by Colorado Superintendents.** By providing new and exciting pathways for students, the policy provides new opportunities to explore their interests, connect with others, and build a vision for their future. The Measure of America tracks data on disengaged youth (teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are neither attending school nor working). They estimate that the number of disconnected youth will easily top six million and could swell to almost one-quarter of all young people.
- **Expands career connected learning; a win-win for employers and students.** Employers who invest in offering internship and apprenticeship opportunities to students see a strong return on investment. By contributing the up-front costs of training and supporting students, employers benefit from the innovative ideas and energy these youth provide, and build a strong, local talent pipeline for their business, rather than relying on expensive recruiting from outside Colorado.
- **Creates more affordable pathways to postsecondary education.** As the costs of higher education continue to rise without guaranteed outcomes for students, it is critical to offer more affordable and efficient pathways to college and career.

Specifically, the bill has two parts:

## 1) **Flexibility from Seat Time Requirements to Expand Career Connected Learning in Schools**

In 2019, the legislature approved the Innovative Learning Opportunities Pilot, which took an important step toward providing school districts flexibility to provide students more opportunities to learn outside of the classroom. The pilot was limited to five school districts in 2020. This bill seeks to expand this successful program with an expanded focus on the following:

- **Addresses inequity.** The bill requires that schools and districts demonstrate specific intention and effort to better serve students farthest from opportunity. The state will prioritize applicants with strong equity plans.
- **Prioritizes what works.** The bill encourages districts to offer high quality pathways for students, including registered or unregistered apprenticeships, internships, technical training or bootcamps through an industry provider, teacher training opportunities, concurrent enrollment, and industry certificates.

## 2) **Innovation in the Fourth Year of High School**

According to new ACT data, one in four high school students is academically ready at the end of 11th grade to start college-level coursework full time. One-third of those students come from low-income families, and 30 percent of those are racial minorities. Accelerated graduation approaches to high school can increase student engagement and reduce the total financial costs of pursuing postsecondary learning. This bill:

- Starts as a pilot, by allowing up to five school districts the ability to provide funding to free and reduced lunch qualifying students who graduate early.
- Allows early graduates the opportunity to pursue a meaningful postsecondary credential or workforce training at the institution of their choosing in what would have been their fourth year of high school via the funding they receive. In addition to tuition, funding can also cover indirect costs like transportation and textbooks.

In terms of cost, the program will be paid through the General Fund with an estimated fiscal impact of \$278,000 for FY21-22 and \$633,360 for FY22-23.

Questions? Please contact:

Kelly Caufield at [kcaufield@coloradosucceeds.org](mailto:kcaufield@coloradosucceeds.org) or 571-235-1338 or Moira Cullen at [mcullen@capstonegroupllc.com](mailto:mcullen@capstonegroupllc.com) or 303-868-8452

Supporting Organizations:



Additional Supporters:

- Beacon Network Schools
- Pipefitters Local 208
- RootED Denver
- Untapped Potential Project