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Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Colorado League of Charter Schools. Don't forget to add srader@coloradoleague.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

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Charting the Capitol Interim Report - October 2016

Getting Ready for 2017

The Colorado League of Charter Schools' Policy & Advocacy Team has been hard at work since the legislative session ended in the spring. With the 2017 General Assembly set to convene in just a few months, we wanted to update you on the issues we've been tracking and the efforts we've been involved in since May. Please continue reading for updates on:

[Development of the League's 2017 Legislative Agenda](#)
[Charter School Election Activity Do's and Don'ts](#)
[The New Federal Every Student Succeeds Act](#)
[Getting Involved in State Charter School Advocacy](#)
[Legislator Outreach and School Tours](#)
[Access to Medicaid and Other State and Federal Funds](#)
[A School Leader's Guide to the 2016 Colorado Legislative Session](#)
[Announcement of 2016 A+ Advocates](#)

We will return to regular distribution of this newsletter in January. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to reach out to any members of our team (contact information included at the bottom of this newsletter) should you have any questions or concerns.

2017 Legislative Agenda: We Want to Hear from You

The League's Governmental Affairs Committee, comprised of representatives from charter public schools across the state, education reform organizations and other district and community partners, has been meeting regularly since August. Over the coming months this group will help the League prepare for, and navigate, the 2017 legislative session, including creation of the League's 2017 legislative agenda. [Click here to view a list of current committee members.](#)

The Governmental Affairs Committee is just one way in which the League seeks input on our legislative agenda. We also want to hear from you! Specifically, we welcome your feedback on the following:

- What are the main challenges currently confronting your charter public school?
- What do you see as the major issues impacting the charter school sector as a whole?
- What are possible legislative solutions that could help address these challenges?

We welcome input on these and any other challenges/priorities. Please email responses to Dan Schaller, Director of Governmental Affairs at dschaller@coloradoleague.org (or call him at 303-989-5356, ext. 105).

In November we will distribute a draft of the League's 2017 legislative agenda to League members for feedback.

The Do's and Don'ts of Charter School Election Participation

A number of school districts across the state are pursuing mill and bond initiatives in the upcoming election. In response, many of you have been asking, "Are we allowed to get involved? If so, how?" To assist in answering these questions, we developed a short one-pager that provides an overview of the key do's and don'ts of charter public school involvement in political activity. [Click here to access this resource](#), and be sure to consult your school's legal counsel should you have any specific follow-up questions related to this guidance.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Updates

The latest iteration of the federal education law, known as the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. States, including Colorado, are now sifting through the law's implications and working to develop state plans that comply with its requirements. The League has been actively involved in these conversations and worked hard to ensure charter representation on a number of the committees established by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to craft Colorado's plan.

There are a number of moving pieces involved in ESSA's implementation. We encourage you to keep a close eye on the conversation by signing up for CDE's periodic ESSA e-newsletter [here](#). This resource - the most recent edition of which is available [here](#) - will provide updates on major developments, including information about the work of the state hub and spoke committees, as well as important actions by CDE, the Colorado State Board of Education and the U.S. Department of Education. Stay tuned also for regular updates from the League as an ongoing part of this newsletter.

[Click here for resources](#) that will provide you with a quick overview/introduction to ESSA and some of its key decision points for states.

Getting Involved in Charter School Advocacy

Whether it's [the NAACP resolution calling for a moratorium on charter public schools](#) or [John Oliver's recent charter attack](#) (on HBO), the critics of choice and charter public schools seem to be coming out in force. We fully expect this to translate into anti-charter public school proposals at the Capitol this spring. The League and the Colorado charter public school community need your help to ensure we're prepared to educate the public and our elected officials about how charter public schools are benefiting Colorado students.

Here's how you can help:

- Make sure you and your school's parents, teachers, and board members are signed up for **the Colorado Charter Advocacy Network**. [By taking just a few minutes to follow this link and sign up today](#), you will ensure that you receive emails and action alerts when policy changes impacting charter schools are under consideration.
- **Put us in contact with well-spoken parent, staff and teacher advocates at your school.** We continue to solicit names for our budding Charter Advocacy Corps ([click here for further details](#)). If you have the names of individuals that you think would make for strong and committed advocates, please send them our way (to dschaller@coloradoleague.org).

The Colorado charter public school community must come together to inform the public about all of the great opportunities charters are providing for children. Please activate your communities and spread the word about how your school's families and staff can get involved.

Legislator Outreach

While the League meets regularly with elected officials to highlight and advocate for issues

impacting charter public schools, it is far more effective when those same elected officials hear from you! Now is the ideal time to be reaching out to your school's elected officials as once the legislative session starts in January, lawmakers are less able to accommodate meetings and school visits. We strongly encourage you to contact elected officials in your area, invite them for a tour of your school, and continue to develop relationships with them. [Click here to find contact information for your elected officials](#), and please let us know if there is anything we can do to assist in your outreach efforts. Legislators enjoy connecting with their constituents and hearing about their successes (and they love seeing and hearing from students), so don't miss this opportunity to reach out and show off the great things that make your charter public school unique!

Access to Medicaid and Other State and Federal Funds

Did you know that charter public schools in Colorado may be eligible to receive a share of the Medicaid funds received by their district? This is due in large part to [House Bill 16-1422](#), legislation passed in 2016 that stipulates that school districts must distribute to charter schools on a per pupil basis any state or federal money that the district receives based on a per pupil calculation *if the calculation includes pupils enrolled in the charter school*. To learn more about your school's eligibility for Medicaid fund distribution, please contact your district's Medicaid coordinator to learn what types of funds the district is receiving and whether your district is including your charter public school's students in their per pupil calculation for Medicaid funds.

A School Leader's Guide to the 2016 Legislative Session

The League has once again developed our annual overview of the previous legislative session. [A Charter School Leader's Guide to the 2016 Colorado Legislative Session](#) provides an easy-to-read, one-stop document to help you 1) learn about the education-related bills passed in 2016 and 2) understand how these changes directly impact Colorado charter public school operations. We encourage you to take a look so you can be up-to-speed on all the legislative changes that took place last year and how those might impact your school. Of particular note: HB16-1422, the School Finance Act that contained a number of favorable charter school provisions, and HB16-1423, the Student Data Security Act that heightens protections for privacy of student data.

Announcing the 2016 A+ Advocates

Charter public school and legislative advocates play a critical role in helping to advance charter public school policy each year. At the recent Fall Charter School Summit, the League recognized the following individuals and organizations as "A+ Advocates." We cannot thank these individuals and organizations enough for their tremendous public support of charter schools and charter school students over the course of the past year. Without them, we wouldn't have been able to accomplish anywhere near as much as we did for Colorado's children!

- Charter school awardees -
 - Michael Hayes, Head of School, [Mountain Village Montessori Charter School](#)
 - [KIPP Colorado Schools](#)
 - Bill Kottenstette, Executive Director, [Compass Montessori School](#)

- Legislator awardees -
 - Colorado State Senator Owen Hill
 - Colorado State Representative Kevin Priola
 - Colorado State Representative Lang Sias
 - Colorado State Representative Angela Williams

Sincerely,

The League Policy and Advocacy Team

Dan Schaller
Director of Governmental Affairs
dschaller@coloradoleague.org
303-989-5356 x105

Jessica Johnson
General Counsel / Director of Policy
jmjohnson@coloradoleague.org
303-989-5356 x121

Nora Flood
President
nflood@coloradoleague.org
303-989-5356 x109

Kerri Barclay
Communications Manager
kbarclay@coloradoleague.org
303-989-5356 x125

Colorado League of Charter Schools, 2696 S. Colorado Blvd.,
Suite 250, Denver, CO 80222

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