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COLORADO SENATE DEMOCRATS

Bill to Support Colorado’s Educator Workforce Clears Committee!

*Zenzinger receives bipartisan support for legislation that will work to recruit and retain
quality teachers*

DENVER, CO - Today, a bill sponsored by Senator Rachel Zenzinger was approved with bipartisan support from the Senate Education Committee. SB21-185 would help reduce the teacher shortage in Colorado by empowering local leaders to recruit subject matter experts into the educator workforce, supporting the development of a workforce that more closely reflects the diversity of Colorado’s students, and expanding pathways into the profession.

“We need to support our students by recruiting and retaining more quality teachers, teachers that will reinvigorate our schools as bright, inspiring leaders for our kids to look up to,” said Senator Zenzinger (D-Arvada). “This bill will work to attract talented educators into the profession by bringing people in from multiple entry points, including young students, new graduates, career changers, veterans, and content experts – ensuring all students have access to great teachers and role models.”

Colorado has suffered from ongoing teacher shortages for a matter of years – seeing a [17 percent](#) decrease in teacher preparation program enrollment over the last decade.

The state also has poor diversity in its teacher workforce, with only 9 percent of teachers being people of color while 46 percent of students identify as being from BIPOC communities. Such shortages have a particularly detrimental effect on rural schools, which face even tougher challenges in recruiting and keeping teachers.

In an effort to address this ongoing challenge, the Keystone Policy Center and the Public Education & Business Coalition worked with leaders to form the Education System Resiliency and Innovation Initiative (ESRII), a broad coalition and research initiative focused on strengthening the teacher workforce, improving educator supports for teacher practice and instructional delivery, and identifying additional systemic shifts that could build off of learning from the current disruption.

From June 2020 - January 2021, more than 80 stakeholders from across Colorado's education ecosystem and private sector met to identify opportunities to learn from the challenges presented by COVID and innovations developed by leaders across the state responding to their local communities' needs. In February of 2021, the group published *Rebuilding Stronger* which consists 16 recommendations for action at the state and local levels.

[SB 21-185](#) draws on several recommendations from this collective work as well as the previous work of the legislature, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), and the state's broad education ecosystem.

Specifically, the bill will:

- Allow a school district or charter school to employ a person who holds an adjunct instructor authorization to teach in all content areas in order to address recruiting challenges and establish a diverse workforce.
- Create the educator recruitment and retention program (ERR) in CDE to provide support to members of the armed forces, nonmilitary-affiliated educator candidates and local education providers to recruit, select, train, and retain highly qualified educators across the state. Eligible ERR program participants

may receive up to \$10,000 for the tuition cost of participating in an educator preparation program.

- Create the teacher recruitment education and preparation program (TREP) program with the aim of increasing the number of students entering the teaching profession and creating a more diverse teacher workforce to reflect the ethnic diversity of the state.
- Require the state board for community colleges and occupational education, the department of higher education, and the deans of the schools of education in Colorado institutions of higher education, to collaborate and design a teaching career pathway for individuals to enter the teaching profession.

The legislation now moves to the Senate Appropriations Committee for further consideration. Information and updates regarding the bill can be found at

leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb21-185.

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About the Colorado Senate Democrats

The 20-member Senate Democratic Caucus for the 2021 legislative session includes Senators Leroy Garcia, Kerry Donovan, Pete Lee, Joann Ginal, Tammy Story, Sonya Jaquez Lewis, Stephen Fenberg, Rachel Zenzinger, Jessie Danielson, Dominick Moreno, Brittany Pettersen, Faith Winter, Jeff Bridges, Chris Kolker, Janet Buckner, Rhonda Fields, Chris Hansen, Robert Rodriguez, James Coleman, Julie Gonzales.