

# Colorado Facility Schools Board

November ##, 2022

Colorado State Board of Education  
201 East Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear State Board of Education members,

We are the Facility Schools Board. Facility schools provide educational services to students with significant physical, behavior, mental health, or special education needs in residential, day treatment, and hospital settings. The Facility Schools Board, which is empowered by statute to make recommendations to the State Board, represents stakeholders across the state.<sup>1</sup>

Facility schools are in crisis. Over the last five years, facility schools' capacity has decreased by 30%. Many have closed. Those that are still open struggle to meet high costs on *extremely* tight budgets. The result is that many of Colorado's most disadvantaged students whose needs cannot be met by districts also cannot access facility schools.

In S.B. 21-274, the General Assembly established the Facility School Model Workgroup to study and make recommendations about the continuum of services and a sustainable funding structure. We are all members of the workgroup, along with 24 other expert stakeholders. The workgroup's final report and recommendation has recently been shared with you and the Joint Budget Committee.

**We urge you to engage with the workgroup's findings and endorse its recommendations.** Perhaps the most important recommendation is to move to a baseline funding model that will ensure all facility schools have the minimum funding necessary to meet students' needs. The current per-student, per-day funding model is broken. It is unpredictable and inadequate. Facility schools cannot plan for or maintain the very basics of operating a school under the current system. A baseline funding model would establish and provide the minimum funding necessary so that facility schools could plan for and consistently provide their services.

---

<sup>1</sup> § 22-2-404, et seq., C.R.S.

The workgroup also recommends funding operational costs that facilities may share; establishing a technical assistance center to support districts; expanding and clarifying the continuum of student placements; and streamlining the Department of Public Health and Environment, Department of Human Services, and Department of Education requirements necessary to become an approved facility school. The report details the reasoning behind these recommendations.

**We need your help.** Please dig into the report, ask us questions, and advocate for implementation of the recommendations at the Joint Budget Committee and the General Assembly. Colorado's most disadvantaged students cannot wait any longer. They deserve our support now.

Respectfully,  
The Facility Schools Board

Steven Ramirez, chairperson  
Facility school representative, Chief Executive Officer of Shiloh Home, Inc.

Dr. Carolena Steen, vice chairperson  
School district representative, Assistant Superintendent, Cheyenne Mountain School District

Sonjia Hunt  
Facility school representative, Director of Special Education, Hilltop Youth Services

Elizabeth Lucier  
State placing agency representative, Program Director/Placement Supervisor, Dungarvin

Laura Writebol  
County Department of Human Services representative, Education Liaison, Denver Department of Human Services

Mylynda Herrick  
Parent/former student representative