



September 8, 2022

To the Douglas County School Board,

We applaud the Douglas County School Board for its work and efforts to improve the salaries for teachers and infrastructure upgrades. However, we are very disappointed that you have decided to exclude nearly two thousand Douglas County students that attend Ascent Classical Academy and Colorado Early Colleges from the benefits of the proposed Mill Levy Override (MLO) ballot measure. These are high-performing schools that are deeply embedded in the Douglas County community.

The Douglas County families attending those schools are being denied access to public funds simply because their students attend a public charter school authorized by the statewide authorizer, the Charter School Institute, rather than the Douglas County School District.

The Douglas County School Board should support *all* Douglas County families that exercise their right to school choice. These families deserve to have equal access to public funds. Standing up for the principle of school choice means standing up for all families, including those attending Ascent Classical Academy and Colorado Early Colleges. We should fund students instead of systems.

The Douglas County School Board majority has been unfairly attacked by the teacher's union and other special interests that oppose school choice. We stand with the board majority against the vicious attacks from anti-school choice forces. We want to be clear, however, that we strongly advocate for school choice and funding that follows the student.

We also want to push back on one false criticism of Ascent Classical Academy and Colorado Early Colleges – namely that since they are not authorized by the Douglas County School Board there is a lack of an accountability mechanism for the expenditure of MLO dollars.

The Charter School Institute (CSI) is a high-quality authorizer and would gladly have worked with the Douglas County School Board to ensure accountability for MLO dollars. CSI could easily verify MLO dollars and report this accounting to the Douglas County School Board. CSI's annual process would ensure that funds were used at the school level in accordance with ballot language and provided full accountability.

Lastly, we thank board members for their offer to partner with us in advocating for equitable state funding for all schools. While we hope to see success in that endeavor in the coming years, such advocacy does not preclude local action. The Douglas County School Board could

have funded all public-school students in its boundaries equitably right now, to the immediate benefit of educators and students at Ascent Classical Academy and Colorado Early Colleges. We are disappointed that the district instead chose to exclude those 2,000 students from the anticipated MLO revenue.

We appreciate that the Douglas County School Board and district leadership are working diligently to ensure all educators are paid complete salaries. We will continue to advocate for school choice and funding that follows all students.

Sincerely,

Brenda Dickhoner, President & CEO, Ready Colorado

Rep. Mark Baisley, State Senate GOP Nominee, Senate District 4

Sen. Kevin Van Winkle, Senate District 30

Rep. Kim Ransom, House District 44

Lisa Frizell, State Representative GOP Nominee, House District 45

Anthony Hartsook, State Representative GOP Nominee, House District 44

Frank McNulty, Former Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives and current CU Regent GOP Nominee, Congressional District 4

Ross Izard, President, Xiphos Strategies & Douglas County education leader