

**Testimony in support of Senate Bill 22-202 – State Match for Mill Levy Override Revenue**  
Leslie Colwell – Senate Education – April 21, 2022

- Good afternoon members of the committee. My name is Leslie Colwell, and I lead the Colorado Children’s Campaign’s work on K-12 Education.
- In the eight years that I’ve been with the Children’s Campaign, advocating for a more equitable and student-centered school funding system has been a major focus of our work, which is why I’m testifying today in enthusiastic support of Senate Bill 202.
- I think we would all agree that a student’s zip code shouldn’t determine their educational opportunity. But across our state, the funding available for our public schools depends largely on local property wealth, meaning the opportunities available to kids differ based on where they live.
- Without a statewide solution to funding challenges since the last recession, districts have increasingly turned to 178 local solutions by passing “mill levy overrides” to generate additional funding and offset state funding cuts.
- The amount of funding approved locally by voters has more than doubled from \$580 million in the 2009-2010 school year to \$1.4 billion in the 2019-20 school year. While we absolutely celebrate communities’ willingness to invest in their students, unfortunately, we know that funding does not benefit all students equitably.
- Sixty-four of 178 school districts have ZERO local mill levy override dollars, while 21 districts have more than \$2,000 per student and nine districts have more than \$3,000 per student.
- It’s not a coincidence that our high property wealth districts are much more able, and more likely, to support their students with overrides. In Fountain school district, one mill raises \$25 per student, while in Pawnee school district, one mill raises \$5,000 per student. This means that districts with low property values, like Fountain, may vote to tax themselves at an absurdly high rate, but generate a small amount of funding, while districts in property wealthy communities can generate substantial revenue by raising their property taxes a relatively small amount.
- A state-level Mill Levy Override Match Fund, created by this bill, will recognize local investments that have been made in low property wealth, low-income communities and meet that effort with a state match. This will level the playing field for schools in these communities, who otherwise will constantly struggle for adequate funding to meet student needs.

- I want to thank Sen. Zenzinger and Sen. Rankin for being champions for this idea for many years, and also members of the CASE subcommittee of CFOs who convened over the interim and did amazing work to flesh out the model and make sure it is serving our communities who most need support.
- I believe SB-202 proposes one of the most IMPORTANT, and most TARGETED, ways to address a growing equity in our system and immediately impact students in a positive way, and we are in full support. Thank you, committee members.