



EDUCATION ALLIANCE
OF COLORADO

Education Alliance of Colorado

2023-2024 Annual Report





Supporting Public Policy **TO PUT KIDS FIRST**

The Education Alliance of Colorado's mission is to support and protect educational freedom through public policy that enhances parental choice and preserves the academic, administrative, and philosophical independence of Colorado schools.



About the **Education of Colorado**

We believe education is a partnership

The Education Alliance of Colorado is a coalition of charter schools and parents working together to support and protect educational freedom in Colorado.

We believe that education is a partnership between schools and families, and that unified engagement between these groups is the key to long-term success and healthy public policy that supports parental choice, school autonomy, and academic excellence.

The Alliance is not a philosophical interest group. It is a nonprofit, member-supported, nonpartisan association that seeks to represent and amplify the voices of parents and the schools they have chosen for the purpose of supporting public policy that puts kids first.

The EAC values fit over quantity when it comes to our members. Each EAC partner school has chosen to join us because they share our vision: that all Colorado parents have the information and ability to access a high-quality education, and that Colorado schools remain free to pursue and provide educational excellence using all tools at their disposal—curriculum, pedagogy, personnel, and administration.

Education Alliance of Colorado

Why Public Charter Schools?

Public charter schools in Colorado have evolved significantly since the passage of the Charter Schools Act in 1993. This legislation empowered local school boards and the state Charter School Institute to authorize charter schools, granting them flexibility in curriculum, teaching methods, and management while holding them accountable for academic results.

Since then, charter schools have grown to serve over 130,000 students and have become an integral part of Colorado's public education landscape.

Why Parents Choose Public Charter Schools

The reasons for choosing a charter school can vary widely among parents, and the decision often depends on individual circumstances, the specific charter school in question, and what the parents prioritize for their child's education.

Parents frequently mention needing specialized or alternative educational approaches that may not be available in traditional public schools. Additionally, parents may seek safety, more personalized learning opportunities, and better academic outcomes for their students.



Guiding Principles of Policy Engagement

01 Mission Alignment

The Alliance will only engage on policy issues that align with its mission to support high-quality educational options through public policy that preserves and enhances the academic, administrative, and philosophical freedom of Colorado schools.

02 Realistic and Valuable Contribution

The Alliance will engage on policy issues only to the extent that it has the capacity to do so, and only to the extent its contribution can reasonably be expected to advance or strengthen an effort to achieve goals in alignment with the organization's mission.

03 Demonstrable Impact

The Alliance will engage only on policy issues that will demonstrably impact its students, families, or member schools.

04 Philosophical Consistency

To provide a good example to students and parents alike, the Alliance will seek to ensure that all policy engagement is consistent with member schools' philosophies, beliefs, and core virtues.

05 United Front

Prior to engagement on any policy issue, the Alliance will seek agreement among member schools regarding position, substance, and messaging so it can present a united front.

06 Unapologetic Defense

The Alliance will unapologetically defend member schools and the families they serve and from policies or other efforts that could undermine, disrupt, or damage educational opportunity.

07 Permanent Interests

The Alliance has no permanent friends and no permanent enemies in the policy space, only permanent interests aligned with preserving and enhancing educational options in Colorado. The organization will work with its partners and allies in every situation possible, but the interests of its member schools and the families they serve must always be primary.

Education Alliance of Colorado

What Makes the EAC Different?

Shared Values

Selective membership focused on shared beliefs and guiding principles, not pure membership numbers or scale.

Grassroots

Genuine focus on grassroots engagement and a partnership between EAC schools and families that creates a unified voice. We are stronger together!



Responsiveness

Responsiveness to members and a commitment to empowering them to play an active, meaningful role in setting priorities and engaging on important issues.

Communication

Frequent, relevant communications designed to keep our members and supporters up to date about the policy issues that matter most to them.



Defending **CHOICE**

Legislation

EAC played a leading role in defeating [HB24-1363](#), the most hostile and damaging anti-charter bill in the history of Colorado.

In addition to heavy lobbying pressure inside the capitol building, tens of thousands of our advocates reached out to members of the House Education Committee in opposition to the bill. Our founder and board chair penned a [national op-ed](#) about the dangers of the bill. And dozens of EAC schools, parents, and others spent hours at the capitol to testify against the bill in person.

HB1363 was ultimately defeated by the House Education Committee—with a promise from the sponsors and others that it will return next year. We will be ready to once again defend our member schools and the families they serve from overreach and malice on the part of anti-charter lawmakers in Denver.

Legal Action

EAC also engaged in a legal debate related to the authorization of new schools of choice by boards of cooperative educational services, filing an amicus brief on the subject with the Colorado Supreme Court in support of parental choice in Colorado. While this avenue of authorization was ultimately blocked by the high court, it started a conversation about how and by whom new schools of choice can be authorized—and how Colorado can think through new ways of expanding educational choice for students and families.



School **AUTONOMY**

EAC remains Colorado's strongest voice for charter school autonomy. We know our schools' freedom to innovate, teach, and make decisions is the cornerstone of their academic and institutional success.

This year, EAC worked heavily on a wide variety of issues related to the independence of our member schools:



We played a pivotal role in defeating SB24-049, which would have dictated to our schools how, when, and why they could remove library materials or make decisions about curricula and classroom materials.



We collaborated with lawmakers and advocates to rethink HB24-1168, which would have made major changes to how charter schools conduct their board meetings. We expect to revisit this conversation in the coming years, this time with more focus on maintaining the autonomy (and budgets) of charter schools.



We worked to amend HB24-1039, which created new laws surrounding the use of students' "chosen names" in school buildings. While this bill ultimately passed despite serious opposition, we hosted a webinar with leading attorneys to help our schools think through its implications in practice and plan for the future.



School **SAFETY**

In addition to many other education-related battles, Colorado's 2024 legislative session included serious debates about school safety and security. EAC continues to believe that the safety of students is the most important thing in any given school building, and we worked hard to ensure that the legislature did not enact proposed statutory changes that would have limited our member schools' ability to build effective security plans.

In particular:

- EAC successfully mobilized school leaders, educators, parents, and others to demand major changes to HB24-1310, which would have outlawed armed staff and made it much harder and more expensive for schools to procure private security. Thanks to these efforts and those of our partners, this bill was ultimately defeated in committee.
- EAC also worked to ensure that SB24-131, which would have designated "sensitive spaces" where the carry of firearms was restricted, did not impede or harm our schools' security plans. While the bill did pass, it did so only in an amended form that addressed our most serious concerns.



School **FINANCE AND FUNDING**

2024 was a big year for school finance on both the legislative and regulatory fronts. EAC engaged at the legislature and with the Colorado State Board of Education to increase funding for our member schools and protect successful enrichment programs from being defunded.

Legislation

School finance issues are typically out of scope for EAC, as our mission is focused exclusively on parental choice and school autonomy. However, we have supported an effort to equalize funding for state-authorized charter schools for several years.

A bill accomplishing that funding change finally passed this year in the form of [HB24-1394](#). Congratulations to all our CSI-authorized member schools! We can't wait to see you put those new funds to work for kids.

On the last day of session, the legislature also passed a massive rewrite of Colorado's school finance formula, which has been in place for three decades. That bill, [HB24-1448](#), makes a variety of changes to the formula that schools will be working through in the coming months and years—especially given that the legislature also significantly increased funding levels moving forward.

Regulation

EAC also successfully engaged on proposed school finance rule changes under consideration by the Colorado State Board of Education. As initially proposed, these rules would have defunded many innovative homeschool enrichment programs, including programs operated for thousands of Colorado students enrolled in EAC member schools.

While the rules did eventually win approval from the board, the final version addressed most (though not all) of our most serious finance and funding concerns. More work remains to be done as EAC members navigate the new rules and their implications for their students and programs.

Grassroot **ADVOCACY**



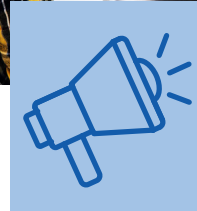
10,000+

**Connections with
elected officials**



1,615

**New advocates
this past year**



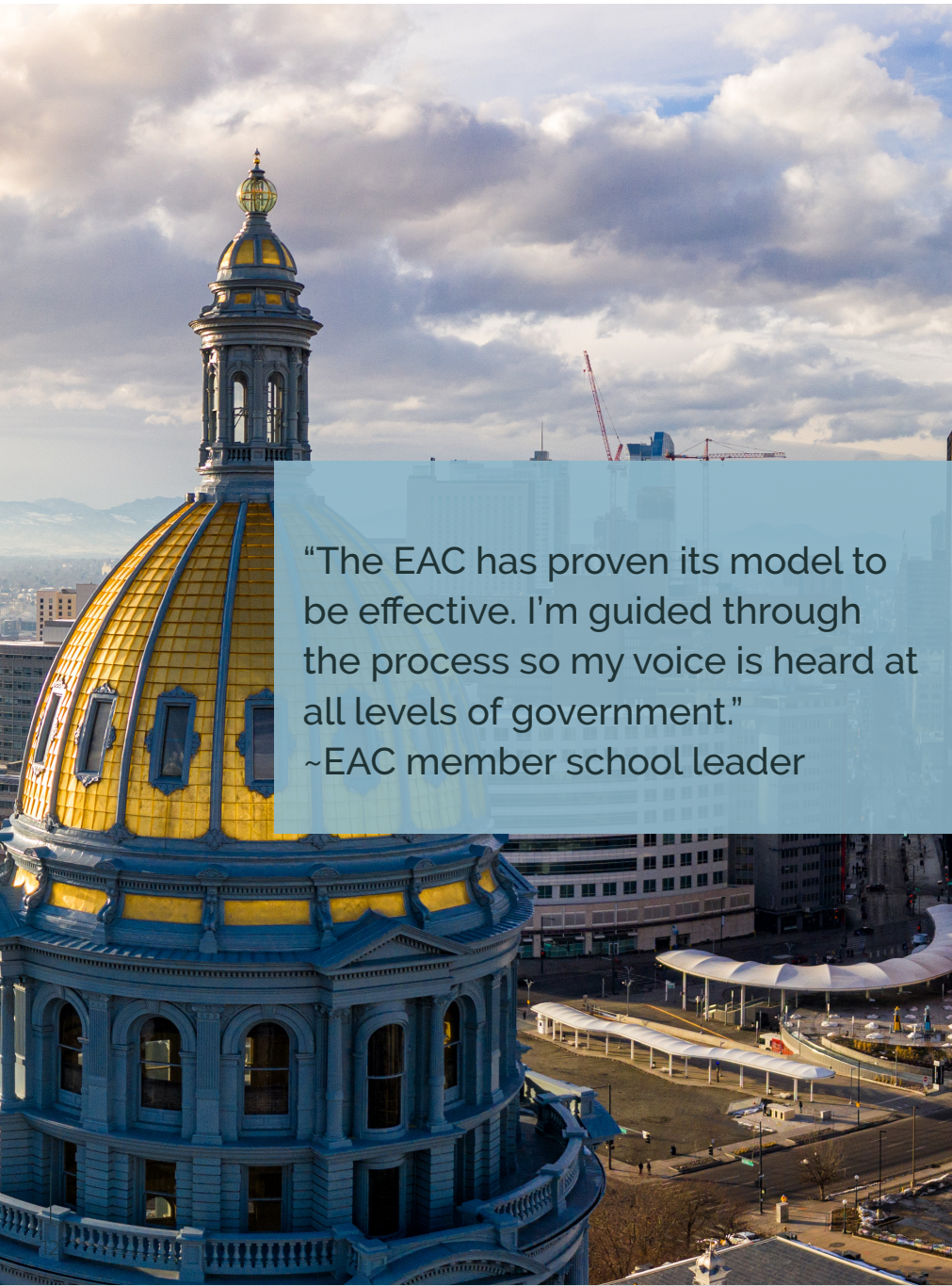
5,600+

Total advocates

EAC knows that the organization's true strength lies in the partnership between schools and the families they serve—particularly with regard to the ability to mobilize large-scale grassroots engagement from advocates on key issues.

In the past year, EAC facilitated over 10,000 connections between EAC advocates and various elected officials ranging from State Board of Education members to state legislators. These advocates shared a variety of personal stories, informed opinions, and beliefs that helped officials build better perspective on complex issues and the ways in which they impact people in the real world.

Our advocate database has grown to over 5,600 advocates, and we will continue to work toward expanding. We've heard from parents and educators that they trust EAC and believe that our organization, through a variety of hands-on and digital supports, provides them with the tools they need to project their voices into discussions about public policy. These voices are EAC's superpower—the thing that truly sets it apart in Colorado's crowded advocacy space.

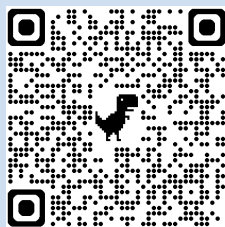


“The EAC has proven its model to be effective. I’m guided through the process so my voice is heard at all levels of government.”

~EAC member school leader



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