

Mister Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Esteemed Judiciary Committee:

I am Autumn Brooks, Volunteer Lobbyist with Clear Creek School District Re-1 (CCSD). Thank you for the opportunity to write to the Committee today concerning HB22-1003. CCSD is absolutely for closing the school-to-prison pipeline, students deserve the tools to thrive, not flounder. That being said, CCSD is concerned with accomplishing this without the need to clean up from unintended consequences.

As written HB22-1003, any district that chooses to participate in this program would have to create their own judiciary system within their schools, under the standards brought forth by the CDE's newly created program. They then have to analyze and report. All of this being done in a two year time frame. At least this is the interpretation of CCSD. Attempts to gain clarification on this from bill sponsors resulted in a single unsatisfactory response of, "This is not a mandate."

The state of Colorado has been working on its judicial system since its inception 146 years ago. Our state, like every other state, got quite the awakening recently that we did not get it right and it needs to be fixed. Yet, we expect the Department of Education, school districts and schools to create, implement and report on a whole new judicial system in two years. The timeline alone is impossible with everything HB22-1003 requires. The workload alone would be astronomical.

CCSD understands that keeping Colorado's youth out of the State's judicial system, and thus out of the school-to-prison pipeline, is the intent of this bill. CCSD believes diversion programs, probation programs, and parole programs should be utilized as a last possible resort (the nuclear option if you will) which is what CCSD does currently. Our reasoning is that these are not the only ways to receive rehabilitative services for delinquents. Colorado has the framework and the ability to utilize other youthful offender organizations established to rehabilitate youthful offenders (including organizations with the ability to teach our youth right from wrong). We need laws to ensure these are being utilized correctly. As well as reforming Colorado's current options.

Colorado faces the reality that all the aforementioned resource programs and judicial programs have to work together to avoid the school-to-prison pipeline. Due to this, CCSD is also advocating for the accountability/reform of all of these interworking parts (organizations and departments alike) that are already in place. We already have various frameworks in place, and we can reform them. We can ensure every possible available effective resource is available in every part of the state, to avoid involvement in the judiciary system. This is not what HB22-1003 will accomplish. CCSD believes a better path would be creating, implementing, and utilizing Restorative Justice practices, as we do. This is a proven pathway Colorado can implement with success.

CCSD recognizes that not every school district is structured like ours. There are districts where the nuclear option is the first option. The question Colorado should be seeking answers to is, why is this the case? Why do some districts choose an option that would lead to the school-to-prison pipeline, and others do not. Finding the why will lead to the answers we are seeking. This will lead to a more appropriate bill to address the issue. Unfortunately, as written HB22-1003 will not accomplish what we are seeking. Instead it will create a more tyrannical feeling environment, making the us vs them dynamic (families vs schools) that much harder to traverse through. CCSD cannot in good conscience support HB22-1003.

Please vote No on HB22-1003, and prevent further harm for our youth. Table this bill, let's circle back and write a bill that will get this right.