

HB1396 Testimony: Advanced Placement Grant Program
Bill Sponsors: Representative Buckner and Senator Moreno

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dr. Carrie A. Olson and I am here as a School Board Director for Denver Public Schools and as a former DPS teacher in support of HB1396. Thank you to all supporters of this legislation who recognize the importance of equal access to AP tests for our low-income students.

There are two reasons I urge you to support HB1396.

First, this bill will provide equity of access. When low-income students have to pay any portion of their AP exam fee, they are immediately put at a disadvantage. Low-income students cannot go home and simply ask their families to pay any portion of the fee as many of these students are already working outside of school to help pay the household bills. Asking them to pay one more bill would be unfair. If we are truly striving for equitable and challenging educational opportunities for **all** students, we must remove this barrier.

Second, this bill will support the current research that demonstrates that participation in AP classes benefit low-income, non-White students. Flores & Gomez (2011) push for school leaders to stop thinking about AP classes as only for the top performing students. They demonstrate how well thought out plans for inviting and supporting all interested students into AP classes increases educational equity and increases academic achievement, especially for non-White low income students. Other research suggests that participation in AP classes increases test scores in all test and gives students the skills needed for college. In addition, even if students do not receive a passing score on the AP test, they are more likely to take another AP class and do better in college. In a study of over 145,000 students in Illinois a researcher found inequities in access to AP classes for non-White, low-income students and he suggests that by removing barriers to AP, educational equity through challenging educational opportunities can be achieved for all. Your support of this bill will do just that.

I will close with a story from when I taught at West High School where we practice AP for all. One of my students, Sofia, was a 9th grader with interrupted schooling from Guatemala who fled political violence. She came to us knowing very

little English. We placed her in our AP Spanish Language and AP Spanish Literature class to continue to improve her Spanish while helping her learn English. When she learned enough English, she took AP English Literature, Government, Calculus, and Psychology. She never would have been able to afford the almost \$600 price tag. Because of her success in high school, she has been accepted into Colorado State University where they have given her 15 credits for her AP Spanish classes. This weekend she said she is excited because she knows she's ready for college. By providing equal access to AP programs and tests, this future bilingual biologist's life has been transformed.

I urge you to vote yes on this legislation to continue to allow all our children to dream and achieve to their highest levels. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.