

## CHAPTER 20

---

**EDUCATION - POSTSECONDARY**


---

## HOUSE BILL 26-1176

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Sirota and Taggart, Brown, Duran, Velasco, McCluskie;  
also SENATOR(S) Amabile and Bridges, Kirkmeyer.

## AN ACT

CONCERNING MODIFICATIONS TO THE FOURTH-YEAR INNOVATION PILOT PROGRAM, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, REDUCING AN APPROPRIATION.

*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

**SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-3.3-1303, **amend** (3)(b)(II) as follows:

**23-3.3-1303. Fourth-year innovation pilot program - creation - eligibility - award of state funding - commission policies.**

(3) (b) (II) (A) FOR AN ELIGIBLE GRADUATE WHO GRADUATES EARLY DURING THE 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, OR 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR, the general assembly ~~shall~~ **also** MAY appropriate to the department of education in the budget year that commences in July following the student's early graduation an amount ~~sufficient for payment of~~ NOT TO EXCEED twenty-five percent of the average state share of the state average per-pupil revenues for the 2021-22 budget year, as calculated during the 2021 regular legislative session, for distribution to the local education provider from which the eligible graduate graduated early prior to completion of the eligible graduate's fourth year of high school. The local education provider is encouraged to direct a portion of the money received pursuant to this subsection (3)(b)(II) to high-quality career and postsecondary counseling and supports to ensure that students who may be eligible for state funding are aware of the pilot program and receive appropriate assistance in determining how to allocate state funding received pursuant to the pilot program to their intended postsecondary program.

(B) IN A STATE FISCAL YEAR FOR WHICH THE AMOUNT APPROPRIATED IS LESS THAN TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE AVERAGE STATE SHARE AS DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (3)(b)(II)(A) OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHALL

---

*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.*

PRORATE THE DISTRIBUTION TO EACH LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER FROM WHICH AN ELIGIBLE GRADUATE GRADUATED FROM ANY MONEY APPROPRIATED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (3)(b)(II)(A) OF THIS SECTION.

**SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-3.3-1305, **repeal** (4) and (5) as follows:

**23-3.3-1305. Reporting requirements.**

~~(4) On or before November 1, 2026, the department, in collaboration with the department of education, shall submit a final evaluation to the governor's office of state planning and budgeting, the joint budget committee, and the education committees of the house of representatives and of the senate, or their successor committees, which must be posted to the department's website and include, at a minimum, the following:~~

~~(a) Analysis of all the data collected pursuant to the annual reporting requirements of this section to assess the impacts and outcomes of the pilot program on the student cohorts participating in the pilot program;~~

~~(b) Objective measures of changes in student behavior resulting from implementation of the pilot program, including whether a student enrolled in a participating school is:~~

~~(i) More likely to graduate early; and~~

~~(ii) More likely to enroll in a postsecondary program, if the student graduated early;~~

~~(c) Analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the pilot program, including the impact on the state budget of the pilot program's incentives for school districts and students when students graduate from high school a single semester or a year early;~~

~~(d) Other information relevant to the costs, benefits, successes, and challenges of the pilot program; and~~

~~(e) Recommendations concerning the feasibility and advisability of continuing the pilot program beyond the pilot stage and changes, if any, that are needed to continue the program beyond the pilot stage.~~

(5) (a) The department, in collaboration with the department of education, may request, and participating local education providers shall provide, data necessary to complete the final evaluation required in subsection (4) of this section:

~~(b) Student data collected pursuant to subsection (4) of this section and this subsection (5) must be disaggregated by gender, grade level, local education provider type, ethnicity, disability, English language learner status, free and reduced-price lunch status, and housing status to the maximum extent possible in compliance with the "Colorado Privacy Act", established pursuant to part 13 of article 1 of title 6; the federal "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Rights Act of 1974", 20 U.S.C. sec. 1232g; and the "Student Data Transparency and Security~~

~~Act" created pursuant to article 16 of title 22. The department and the department of education shall maintain strict standards for student data privacy, comply with standards for reporting data for a student with an accommodation pursuant to section 504 of the federal "Rehabilitation Act of 1973", 29 U.S.C. sec. 701 et seq., as amended, and its implementing regulations, or a student with an individualized education plan; and shall not publicly report individual student data for any purpose.~~

**SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-3.3-1304, **amend** (1) and (2)(a) as follows:

**23-3.3-1304. Receipt and use of state funding.**

(1) To receive state funding pursuant to the pilot program, an eligible graduate must graduate early from a high school participating in the pilot program. ~~The AN eligible graduate WHO GRADUATES EARLY DURING THE 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, OR 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR must commence a postsecondary program within eighteen months after graduating early, or the eligible graduate forfeits the state funding. AN ELIGIBLE GRADUATE WHO GRADUATES EARLY DURING THE 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR MUST COMMENCE A POSTSECONDARY PROGRAM NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 2026, OR THE ELIGIBLE GRADUATE FORFEITS THE STATE FUNDING.~~

(2) (a) The department shall disburse state funding on behalf of the eligible graduate to the eligible graduate's postsecondary program within thirty business days after a request is made in the manner determined pursuant to commission policies and department guidelines. The eligible graduate's postsecondary program shall remit to the eligible graduate that portion of state funding remaining after payment of tuition, fees, and other expenses related to the student's cost of attendance that are payable to the postsecondary program. The eligible graduate shall use remaining state funding for the purposes described in subsection (2)(b) of this section. ~~NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MAKE ALL DISBURSEMENTS TO ELIGIBLE GRADUATES' POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS REQUIRED PURSUANT TO THIS SUBSECTION (2)(a) NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF THE 2026-27 STATE FISCAL YEAR.~~

APPROPRIATION FROM

ITEM & SUBTOTAL	TOTAL	GENERAL FUND	GENERAL FUND EXEMPT	CASH FUNDS	REAPPROPRIATED FUNDS	FEDERAL FUNDS
\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

**SECTION 4. Appropriation to the department of higher education for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025.** In Session Laws of Colorado 2025, section 2 of chapter 476, (SB 25-206), **amend** Part VII (3)(C) and the affected totals as follows:

Section 2. **Appropriation.**

**PART VII  
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**(3) COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL AID**

**(C) Special Purpose**

Veterans'/Law Enforcement/ POW Tuition Assistance	1,643,700	1,643,700				
Native American Students/Fort Lewis College	21,307,918	21,307,918				
Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative Fund	10,000,000	10,000,000				
Tuition Assistance for Career and Technical Education Certificate Programs	450,000	450,000				
Fourth-year Innovation Pilot Program	<del>555,573</del> 524,615	<del>555,573</del> 524,615				

APPROPRIATION FROM

	ITEM & SUBTOTAL	TOTAL	GENERAL FUND	GENERAL FUND EXEMPT	CASH FUNDS	REAPPROPRIATED FUNDS	FEDERAL FUNDS
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
			(1.0 FTE)				
			(0.7 FTE)				
State Aid for Foster Students Program	2,962,463		2,962,463				
			(4.0 FTE)				
Postsecondary Assistance for Students who were Homeless in High School	1,655,041		1,655,041				
			(2.0 FTE)				
	<u>38,574,695.0</u>						
	38,543,737						
<b>TOTALS PART VII (HIGHER EDUCATION)</b>		<u>\$6,492,016,560</u>	<u>\$452,336,026</u>	\$1,232,865,809 <sup>a</sup>	\$3,430,837,406 <sup>b</sup>	\$1,349,232,021	\$26,745,298 <sup>c</sup>
		<u>\$6,491,985,602</u>	<u>\$452,305,068</u>				

<sup>a</sup> This amount shall be from the General Fund Exempt Account created in Section 24-77-103.6 (2), C.R.S.

<sup>b</sup> Of this amount, \$329,555,015 contains an (I) notation.

<sup>c</sup> This amount contains an (I) notation.

**SECTION 5. Safety clause.** The general assembly finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for the support and maintenance of the departments of the state and state institutions.

Approved: March 26, 2026