



**COLORADO**

Department of Public  
Health & Environment

Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

March 13, 2017

Dear Dr. Katy Anthes and the Colorado Department of Education,

The release of Colorado's ESSA State Plan Draft offers our departments great opportunities to collaborate and coordinate to support the academic success and health and wellbeing of all students across Colorado. In response, our department would like to offer comments on the following two sections of the plan:

1. Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools

*Other Indicator of School Quality or Student Success*

We strongly support the reduction of chronic absenteeism as the "other indicator" for elementary and middle schools. This directly impacts academic success, leading to better long-term health outcomes for students. Additionally, this indicator will also provide schools an opportunity to be innovative in supporting students who are chronically absent. We also recommend that this indicator be included at the high school level. We strongly support developing long-term measures around school climate and parent/student/educator satisfaction or engagement, ensuring that they are developed with input from diverse stakeholders and communities.

*State Support and Improvement for Low-performing Schools*

We support the Department of Education in creating a list of evidenced-based interventions, strategies and partnerships that offer support to schools. We also encourage the department to include resources that meet both academic and non-academic needs, including health.

2. Supporting All Students

*Supports for a Well-Rounded Education*

We support the comprehensive needs assessment and the Unified Improvement Planning process, as part of a well-rounded education. We believe this assessment should include a wide variety of data sources, including Healthy Schools Smart Source and the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey data, to determine the greatest academic and non-academic needs of all students and subgroups.

We believe that available funds from Title IV should support strategies for local education agencies to improve school conditions for student learning, including activities that create safe, healthy, and affirming school environments inclusive of *all* students. These funds should also support local education agencies to engage parents, families and communities.

We look forward to the implementation of the ESSA State plan and the continued partnership between the Departments of Public Health and Environment and Education.

Sincerely,

Larry Wolk, MD, MSPH  
Executive Director and Chief Medical Officer

