



## **POSITION STATEMENT: Opposition to Ballot Initiative 25, Learning Enrichment and Academic Progress (LEAP) Program**

Advocates for Public Education Policy opposes Initiative 25. This initiative is vague and overly broad. While it proposes to provide after-school learning opportunities for children, it does nothing to address the underfunding of our public schools, but instead takes money away from public school finance and opens the door for the private sector to tap into critically needed public education funding.

### **It robs money from public schools.**

- It will “increase state expenditures in the newly created Learning Enrichment and Academic Progress Fund by an estimated \$55.8 million in FY 2021-22 and \$109.1 million in FY 2022-23 and in future years.” *[Legislative Council fiscal summary]*
- It will “divert \$21.0 million in FY 2021-22 and \$22.0 million beginning in FY 2022-23 in state land board revenue from the Permanent Fund to the State Public School Fund. The initiative then transfers a corresponding amount of revenue each year from the General Fund.” *[Legislative Council fiscal summary]*
- It will “divert money from the Permanent Fund of the School Land Trust, the interest from which is used for current and future school funding needs, by an estimated \$70.5 million over 10 years.” *[Legislative Council fiscal summary]*
- It will be able to compete with public schools for state and federal funds.

### **It creates a business, designed for private profit.**

- The agency has full authority to operate *independently* of the State Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Commissioner of Education.
- The appointed governing board will develop its own criteria for selection of providers, with no state input, oversight, or accountability.
- The \$1500/year minimum payment per participating child for three years makes the program attractive to for-profit providers.
- It allows public funds to be used for private profit, making the initiative a neo-voucher.
- Federal funds for COVID-19 relief, administered by the state of Colorado, are already available through 2024 to provide the kinds of services that LEAP proposes.

### **It claims to help poor children, but has loopholes.**

- While low-income children are prioritized, the proposal does not address how these children will be invited to participate.
- There is no guarantee that enough low-income families will apply, allowing higher-income students to be funded.
- No criteria are established to ensure that the program would be able to address the special learning needs of the children served.

### **Its eligibility requirements are misleading.**

- It does not require participating children to be enrolled in public schools, just eligible for admission in them. This would allow students who are in private schools to access the program.
- It allows public funding to be used for religious organizations to be providers.

### **It violates rights to privacy required by federal law.**

- It implies that children will not qualify for the program unless their families can provide tax documentation of their income.
- The agency is required to prioritize integration of data with school districts, but data privacy is not guaranteed.