



STATE OF COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Colorado Commission on Higher Education

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

David E. Skaggs
Executive Director

April 22, 2009

To: Senate Education Committee

From: David Skaggs, Executive Director, Department of Higher Education

Subj: ASCENT legislation, HB09-1319

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) strongly supports the overall objectives of the concurrent enrollment legislation (HB09-1319). It will create new and strengthen existing pathways between high schools and institutions of higher education.

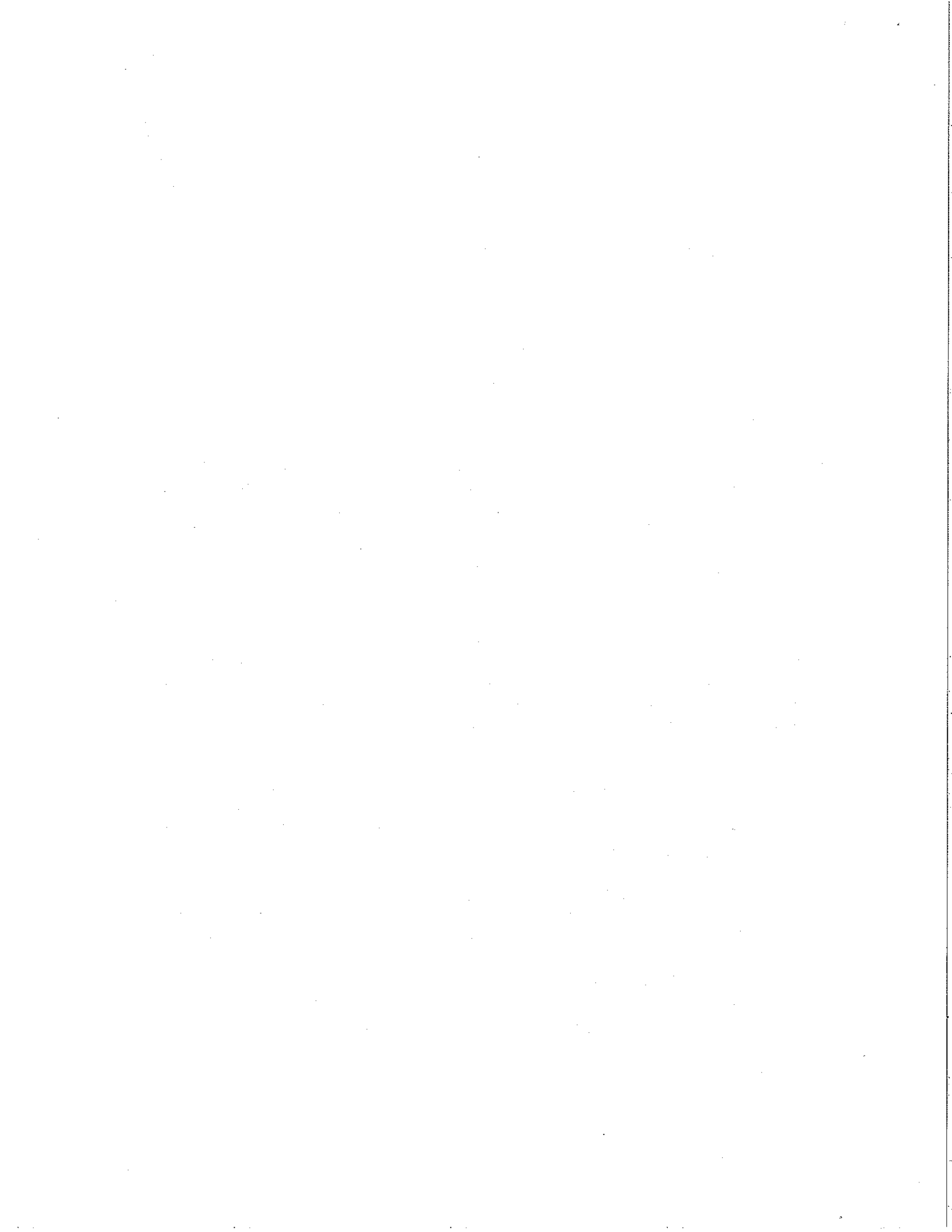
One aspect of the bill is of particular concern, and I would ask the Committee to consider a revising the section of the bill that would establish an Advisory Board. The proposed Board would have various responsibilities to (a) recommending guidelines for the administration of the ASCENT program; (b) advising and assisting school districts and institutions of higher education in preparing cooperative agreements; and (c) making recommendations as necessary to the general assembly, the state board, and the commission concerning concurrent enrollment programs.

DHE's concern is that the proposed Board would appear largely to duplicate statutory responsibilities of the Commission and DHE staff and State Board of Education and Department of Education staff. The composition of the proposed Board would also mean a separate entity, but with a majority appointed by the two department heads, and essentially designed to nudge the two departments toward more transparency and better coordination and collaboration in handling concurrent enrollment issues.

DHE suggests building on the improvement in interdepartmental coordination and cooperation occasioned by the two departments' work to meet our mutual responsibilities under the CAP4K legislation (SB08-212) and the regularity with which the interdepartmental working group now meets to address common responsibilities. With that successful existing structure in mind, I suggest the replacing the provisions of section 107 of the bill with a structure for overseeing the concurrent enrollment legislation that essentially formalizes and relies on the existing interdepartmental working group. This change has the additional benefit of zeroing out the fiscal note on the bill. An amendment has been prepared to make this change, if the committee agrees.

The Department of Higher Education believes the structure described above will result in the implementation of concurrent enrollment polices that reflect the needs of students and state's interest in increasing the college going rate of Colorado citizens.

Thank you very much for your consideration.



In the re-engrossed bill, strike from line 23 on page 17 through line 16 of page 20 and substitute the following:

22-35-107. Concurrent enrollment interdepartmental working group - created -

membership - duties - reports. (1) There is hereby created the concurrent enrollment

interdepartmental working group. The commissioner of education and the executive director

of the department of higher education shall by October 1, 2009, each appoint three members of

the working group from officials from each department primarily responsible for the

implementation of the provisions of this act and shall jointly appoint three additional members

with expertise and experience in career and technical education, extended studies and existing

concurrent enrollment programs in the state. Each member shall serve at the pleasure of the

member's appointing authority. The commissioner shall convene the first meeting of the working

group not later than November 1, 2009. Members shall serve without additional compensation by

virtue of their membership on the working group.

(2) The working group shall be responsible for:

(a) recommending to the state board and the commission guidelines for the administration of the ASCENT program pursuant to section 22-35-108 (4);

(b) advising and assisting school districts and institutions of higher education in preparing cooperative agreements; and

(c) making recommendations as necessary to the general assembly, the state board, and the commission concerning the improvement or updating of state policies relating to concurrent enrollment programs, including but not limited to recommendations of policies that will allow every school district in the state to have adequate resources to enter into at least one cooperative agreement.

(3) In fulfilling its responsibilities under subsection (2) of this section, the working group shall consult broadly with: representatives of the state system of elementary and secondary education including rural public schools or school districts and school districts where a relatively low percentage of recent high school graduates have enrolled in institutions of higher education; with representatives of community colleges and public, four-year institutions of higher education; and with persons with experience in postsecondary student counseling, student admissions, and financial aid.

(4) On or before December 1, 2010, and on or before December 1 each year thereafter, the working group shall prepare a report and submit it to the education committees of the house and senate, the state board and the commission. The report, at a minimum, shall include:

(a) any guidelines that the working group has recommended pursuant to paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of this section;

(b) any advice that the working group has provided pursuant to paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of this section; and

(c) any recommendations that the working group elects to make pursuant to paragraph (c) of subsection (2) of this section.