



# The Bell Policy Center

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## Concerning concurrent enrollment of public high school students in courses offered by institutions of higher education

House Bill 09-1319

Testimony to the House Education Committee

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My name is Frank Waterous, and I am a senior policy analyst with the Bell Policy Center. The Bell is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of Colorado.

**The Bell Policy Center supports House Bill 09-1319. Research shows that well-designed, high-quality concurrent enrollment programs have the potential to lower dropout rates, improve high school performance and increase the number of students who go on to postsecondary studies.<sup>1</sup> Further, expanding concurrent enrollment opportunities is a critical step in the creation of a seamless, aligned educational system consistent with our state's P-20 vision.**

In the long run, expanding concurrent enrollment opportunities is about more than just offering broadened curricular options. It is really about creating *pathways to success*, without which many students – and especially those from low-income and minority families – would not be able to develop their talents, pursue their dreams and reach their full potential.

HB 09-1319, like last year's CAP4K legislation, is quite extensive. So rather than try to comment on all of its points, I want to focus my testimony today on what the Bell sees as three of the most critical and beneficial elements contained in it.

1. The bill explicitly expands the mission of concurrent enrollment to serve a wider range of students – and particularly those from low-income and minority communities with historically low rates of high school graduation and college participation. Both for the options and opportunities available in ninth through 12th grades, and for the newly created ASCENT program, this expanded mission to serve students who might not otherwise appear college-bound is key to the bill's ability to help the state achieve its long-term educational goals.
2. The bill focuses on student success and student readiness, rather than on grade-level attainment, as the measures by which the benefits of participation are gauged. In acknowledging that one-size-does-not-fit-all regarding student capabilities, interests and needs, the bill is a clear step forward in helping more students develop their talents and acquire 21st century skills. And by requiring that every participating student have an academic plan of study to guide and

support his or her progress, the student's success – and the prudent use of public funds – is further ensured.

3. The bill establishes a funding process that is understandable, predictable and consistent – elements that are crucial to supporting the creation of effective concurrent enrollment pathways throughout the state.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, because of their structure, the funding mechanisms and agreements proposed by the bill will lead to new cooperative partnerships between school districts and higher education institutions. This is an important facet of a P-20 vision for Colorado that will foster smoother secondary-to-postsecondary transitions for all of our students.



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Are the programs, policies and funding processes identified in the bill the final answer to achieving our state's concurrent enrollment goals? Of course not. And so the bill also creates a state-level advisory board whose duties include making recommendations as needed for improving and updating concurrent enrollment policies and programs.

In summary, the Bell Policy Center believes that House Bill 09-1319 will benefit both our students and our state, and will lead to increased opportunity for all Coloradans. We urge you to support this important bill, and thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you today.

If you have any questions, or if I can provide further information, please call me at 303-297-0456 or email me at [waterous@thebell.org](mailto:waterous@thebell.org).

#### End notes

<sup>1</sup> See for example, Nancy Hoffman, Joel Vargas, and Janet Santos, *On Ramp to College: A State Policymaker's Guide to Dual Enrollment*, Jobs for the Future, May 2008.  
<http://www.jff.org/Documents/OnRamp.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of concurrent enrollment funding strategies and issues, see *Funding Dual Enrollment Programs*, *The Progress of Education Reform*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Education Commission of the States, February 2009.  
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/79/48/7948.pdf>