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## **Public Comment to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education: Recommended HB 1319 Funding Allocation Model**

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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 non-partisan, non-profit research and policy organization founded on progressive values and dedicated to expanding opportunity for all Coloradans.

**I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. There are two purposes for my public comments. First, to express the Bell Policy Center’s support for the recommended HB 1319 Funding Allocation Model and to urge you to support it, as well. Second, to provide a cautionary note on how the model could be incorrectly perceived as it moves forward, and the work that remains to be done regarding higher education funding in our state.**

### **First, to the Bell’s support for the recommended model.**

We believe that the model is a real step forward for Colorado higher education in terms of increased transparency, accountability, and predictability in the funding allocation process. Along with this, the model also provides flexibility for any needed adjustments in the future to help it work better for students, institutions and the state and as our policy goals or funding considerations evolve.

There are several components of the model that we particularly want to highlight related to our support:

- The model is intentionally aligned with and clearly reflects the state’s Master Plan goals, the HB 1319 project principles and the key themes identified by the public through the project’s outreach process.
- It directs a substantial share of the total state appropriation to College Opportunity Fund stipends, which offset a portion of Colorado students’ tuition costs.
- It provides support and incentives for closing the large post-secondary attainment gap that exists in our state for low-income and minority students.

- It supports and incentivizes increased success for all students through performance funding tied to retention, transfer and completion.
- It incorporates both full-time and part-time students – the latter including many working-age adults – in its allocation methodology.

Finally, we believe that the recommended model will serve as a solid foundation for the ongoing discussion of cost-drivers and tuition policy as the HB 1319 process continues in the coming year.

**Second, to my cautionary note. It regards a potential misperception that we all must guard against when discussing what this model does – and more importantly, what it does not do.**

Focusing only on how the model moves us forward could create the misperception that higher education funding in Colorado has now been “fixed” or that our funding issues have all now been “solved.” This is, of course, not the case. By any measure, Colorado grossly underfunds our public post-secondary education system.

Fundamentally, we need to make it clear that what is before you today is a new model for allocating current and proposed funding. It is not a model that provides the level of increased and sustained funding that is needed to make post-secondary education affordable for all of our students, to achieve our credential-completion goals and to become the state that we aspire to be. It does not close the state’s “aspiration gap” between the level of funding that we now provide and the outcomes that we desire.

As we move forward, we need to use this new model to better explain the benefits of public post-secondary education – in all of its many forms – for individuals and the state and to garner broader support for increased public investment in our students, our institutions, and our system. This model represents a new starting point for these critical discussions, not an end point in them.

Once again, we urge you to support the recommended funding allocation model, and thank you for the opportunity to make these comments today. We also want to thank department staff, the Funding Allocation Model Expert Team, the Public Education and Outreach Team and the Executive Advisory Group for their hard work and dedication throughout this process.