

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Rexford Brown. I am Senior Fellow at the Education Commission of the States (ECS), a non-profit, bipartisan state policy research organization formed by a compact of 49 states and 4 United States Territories. I am testifying today ~~as a representative of that national organization, but I should point out that as Colorado residents, I and many colleagues at ECS have personal, as well as professional, interests in Colorado school reform initiatives.~~ *in the interests of providing a national perspective on the bill, ECS, as a non-lobbying organization, is neither for nor against particular pieces of legislation, but we are happy to provide perspective*

~~It is my opinion that~~ In order to assess the merits and liabilities of this bill it is important for this legislature to understand where it fits in the broader context of the school reform movement taking place across the nation.

Nationally, Presidents Bush and Clinton, along with the governors of all fifty states and hundreds of business and education leaders, have declared for several years that the economic security of this country depends upon fundamental reform of our system of schooling-- not minor changes, not incremental changes, but fundamental and, to use President Bush's word, radical changes. Far too few students are learning to use their minds fully, far too few have the skills and knowledge it takes to participate fruitfully in the complex workworld and challenging social life they now face upon graduation.

Accordingly, the U. S. Department of Education, the Congress and numerous state legislatures have been creating incentives for fundamental changes in curriculum, in teaching, in assessment and in all the ways we have been running our schools for the last fifty years.

To underscore their seriousness about the need for profound change, a number of American business leaders created the New American Schools Development Corporation in order to stimulate radical innovations that would move American education from being a "low performance" system to becoming a "high performance" system. Eight hundred groups from around the country vied for funds to design "break the mold," 21st century schools; eleven were chosen. They are now at work designing more productive and powerful learning opportunities for young people. *I work with F. E. D. design teams, including the one that involves James Lovelock, Ted Sizer, Howard Gardner*

When the designs are completed and tested in different kinds of communities, they will become available as viable alternatives to the current, largely uniform, system of public schooling. When to these eleven models are added further alternatives already in operation --such as the Coalition of Essential Schools, Accelerated Schools, Montessori Public Schools, Science and Technology Magnet Schools and many others--a school district or a state could conceivably offer parents a wide range of learning options for their children. ~~Public school choice, long sought, but seldom achieved, could become a reality in any community.~~