



The Colorado Health Foundation™

April 7, 2015

Members of the Colorado State Board of Education
Colorado State Board of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Healthy Kids Colorado Survey

Dear Colorado State Board of Education Members:

The Colorado Health Foundation strongly supports the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) and urges you to protect the integrity of this source of valuable information for parents and others invested in promoting the health of Colorado's youth. As an organization focused on making Colorado the healthiest state in the nation, the Colorado Health Foundation is committed to ensuring the state maintains relevant, reliable data on issues impacting the health of Coloradans. Data from the HKCS are critical to parents, student groups, schools, local public health agencies, nonprofits and community service providers who use them to design programs and policies to better support the health and wellness of Colorado youth. It is a voluntary and anonymous survey that produces tremendous benefits for students, parents, schools and communities.

The Colorado Health Foundation is a non-profit organization guided by a vision of making Colorado the healthiest state in the nation together with partners from the public and private sectors. We engage in grantmaking, public policy, evaluation, private sector initiatives and communications outreach to ensure a future state where Colorado's communities promote health and its health care systems deliver excellent, affordable care to Coloradans who both have and desire good health. Much of our work is focused on improving health and wellness within Colorado schools. Over the years we have invested significant resources to support the development and sustainability of school-based health centers, to improve school meal programs, to promote high quality physical education programs, and to encourage active play through school and community playgrounds. In 2013 alone, we awarded nearly \$100M to Colorado nonprofit organizations around the state.

The HKCS is the best source of health and behavior data for middle and high school students currently available in Colorado. The Foundation relies heavily on the data to inform our work and to guide our funding decisions in school districts and communities. In making our funding decisions, we look for evidence of need and then we rely on data to document progress.

In addition, on an annual basis we publish the Colorado Health Report Card. This report looks at 38 health indicators across the life stages so we can monitor the progress of Colorado as compared to other states. The HKCS has been the main data source for adolescents since we began publishing the Report Card in 2006. Eight of the 11 indicators for this age group came from the survey. The data illuminate areas of improving health among Colorado youth as well as

areas of concern. Additionally, the data allow us to understand health disparities related to income, gender, race/ethnicity, geography and sexual orientation. For example, using additional data from the HKCS, the Foundation recently published the Colorado Health Report Card, Extra Credit: Get Active. This report shows that girls trail boys when it comes to physical activity with about 40 percent of high school girls attending at least one physical education class a week compared with 52 percent of boys. Teens who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual are less physically active than their heterosexual peers (14.5 percent reporting an hour of daily physical activity, compared to 28 percent).

When sharing the Report Card, stakeholders often ask for local data. For the first time in 2013, the HKCS reported data at the Health Statistics Region-level and participating districts received aggregate data highlighting the challenges and opportunities facing their individual student populations. More importantly than how we use the data, our partners rely on the survey to identify important health issues affecting teens in their region and to inform programming at the local level.

Today, school districts have the authority to determine if they wish to participate in HKCS as well as the best way to administer the survey. The majority of districts choose to participate and implement a passive consent (or opt-out) process that allows school leaders, parents, and students to each have the opportunity to decline participation in the survey. No student, parent, school, or district is required to participate in the HKCS if they do not wish to do so. We fully support the voluntary implementation methodology that is in place today because it allows choice for students and parents and promotes local control for schools and districts.

Given the importance of the survey to so many parents, students, and organizations committed to children's health across the state, we urge you to vote to protect the integrity of the survey and maintain the current implementation methodology. Please do not hesitate to contact Alexis Weightman, Policy Director at the Colorado Health Foundation, at 303-953-3600 or aweightman@coloradohealth.org if you have any questions or we can be of assistance to you and your staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rahn Porter", with a stylized, flowing script.

Rahn Porter
Interim President and CEO
The Colorado Health Foundation