



Colorado Connection

1st Quarter 2024



Tell Congress to pass the Paraprofessional and Education Support Staff Bill of Rights

Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRPs) are essential to Head Start, our preK-12 public schools and our colleges. Their impact on students' lives is long-lasting. We need to do everything in our power to ensure dignity and respect for these hardworking individuals. If passed, the **Paraprofessionals and Education Support Staff Bill of Rights** ([H. Res. 990](#) and [S. Res. 450](#)) would lift up the need for living wages, safe working conditions, respect and dignity.

Our schools would not function without the work of school support professionals. It's time to protect these workers, pay them a living wage, press for real solutions for staffing shortages, and provide our public institutions with a workforce our kids and communities need.

The Paraprofessionals and Education Support Staff Bill of Rights would do just that. Click ["start writing"](#) and tell your lawmakers to pass it now.

In Unity –
Bernadette (Bernie) Jiron
AFT Colorado President
303-744-9962



From your Executive Director

By: Kallie Leyba

The most significant portion of my job for the first two quarters of 2024 has been in my role as AFT Colorado's in-house lobbyist. We are about a quarter of the way through the legislative session and, currently, the AFT Colorado is following 102 bills! So much of what happens at the Capitol touches our students, our jobs, and our members' lives. We have a volunteer legislative committee that reviews bills every week and determines the positions we will take. The committee can choose to oppose, monitor, support, strongly support, or strongly oppose a bill. Strongly support or oppose typically means we will actively lobby and provide committee testimony. Thank you to our dedicated legislative committee for their work throughout the week learning about bills and for giving up an hour every Friday afternoon.

We can always use more members on our testimony team! Currently we are grateful to have members of the Douglas County Federation Retirees (DCFR) Bill Hamaker, Tom Yondorf, Kathy Dorman, Nancy Lawson, and Cindy Kreek as our core team-with support from DCF Vice President Sarah Mesmer and DCF Organizer Lindsay Lynn. If you are willing to join us, please email me at KLeyba@AFTColorado.org.

Testifying is easy – you can do it remotely or in-person and have a few minutes to share your story. If you've given public comment at a school board meeting this is similar—but I find it easier and less stressful. I can help you write your testimony or help you prepare however you would like and will be in the room with you when you do it.

Please email me at KLeyba@AFTColorado.org and let me know that you will step up in this important role. I welcome any members to come hang out with me in the Capitol as well. I'll show you around and together we can watch the sausage being made!

In solidarity,

Kallie Leyba
Executive Director
AFT Colorado



At the Governor's State of the State Address with Amie Baca-Oehlert and Kevin Vick from CEA.

Managing Behavior in School Communities - Course

Registration - 30 hours

Are you struggling with disruptive behaviors that take away from learning time or that foster ill will? Are you looking for practical solutions that can be implemented immediately? Whether you are a classroom teacher, support staff or are involved in daily contact with students, this class has strategies for you. This course is intended for **PreK-12 educators and instructional support staff** in all content areas and disciplines. Managing Behavior in School Communities is a course that presents the most recent and seminal research on challenging student behavior. It provides educators with effective strategies for managing unwanted behavior across a variety of learning environments. This course will provide educators with the information, tools, and skills they may need to prevent or eliminate challenging or anti-social behaviors and/or to manage much of this behavior when it occurs.

Upon completion of this course the participant will be able to:

- Establish shared understanding of how to define, record, and collect data on negative student behavior.
- Utilize research to establish the importance of social skills training and positive reinforcement as prevention and intervention tools.
- Facilitate understanding the role of bias, discipline disparities, and race-neutral policies and their impact on diverse school communities.
- Examine the use of positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) and de-escalation to foster healthy school climates.

Dates and times:

Thursday February 22nd - Information meeting 7:00 - 8:00 Zoom (link will be emailed one week before class)

Thursday February 29th 4:30- 7:00 pm **all meetings on Zoom**

Thursday March 7th 4:30-7:00 pm

Thursday March 14th 4:30- 7:00 pm

Thursday March 28th 4:30- 7:00 pm

Thursday April 4th 4:30- 7:00 pm

Thursday April 11th 4:30- 7:00 pm

Thursday April 25th 4:30- 7:00 pm

Thursday May 2nd 4:30- 7:00 pm

Thursday May 9th 4:30- 7:00 pm

It is not too late to join our class that starts February 29th. (information meeting on February 22nd) registration [link](#).



Volunteers Needed!



**We need your help to interview
candidates for CO AFL and DALF
Endorsement**

Saturday February 24th: 10:00-1:30pm

Saturday March 2nd: 10:00-1:30pm

at 5610 Logan St., Denver, CO 80216

Share with your members and delegates!

<https://bit.ly/2024EndorsementEventMemberReg>

Local Union Updates



Douglas County School Board Update

At the DCSD Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, February 13, Board

President Christy Williams appointed Tim Moore to fill the board seat left vacant when Mike Peterson resigned in December.

Prior to Tuesday's meeting there were 3 candidates under consideration - Natalie Wong, a former teacher, Sandra Brownrigg, one of the leaders of the 5A/5B campaign last fall, and Tim Moore, a former sheriff's deputy. You can read more about Tim Moore's background and experience [here](#).

Legislative Update

EXCESSIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN CHILDREN

AFT released a report called Likes vs Learning: The Real Cost of Social Media for Schools, which details the detrimental effects that excessive social media use has had on students. Here in Colorado, House Bill 24-1136 aims to confront excessive social media use in children and implement supports to address the decline in mental health it has caused.

On Thursday, February 22, DCF Retirees President Bill Hamaker testified at the State Capitol in favor of this bill.



BOOK BANNING

Colorado Senate Bill 24-049 AKA the Freedom to Read Act addresses book banning by creating an inclusive process to evaluate challenged books. It would require that school districts set up a committee that includes all stakeholders - teachers, librarians, administrators, parents, students, and the superintendent. It would also require that any person challenging a book be a resident in the district and have children in the district, which would cut down on political actors traveling to Douglas County in order to challenge books and stir up chaos. If you would like to testify in favor of this bill, either in person or virtually, please contact Kallie Leyba at kleyba@aftcolorado.org.

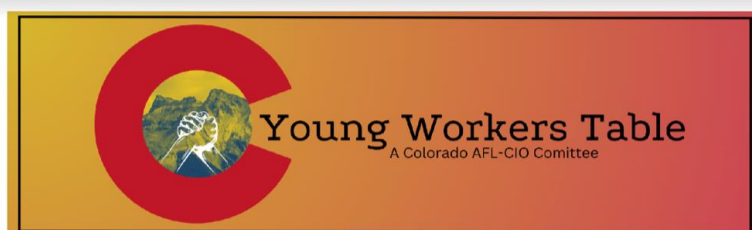
If you would like to testify for upcoming legislation, either in person or virtually, please contact Kallie Leyba at kleyba@aftcolorado.org

AFL-CIO Colorado's Young Worker Summit

The summit will take place on Friday, March 15, 2024, and will feature a myriad of panels addressing overall worker issues that are especially prescient to young workers. It is an event we are hoping will bring many people, young and old, together to listen and learn about how we can make significant change in our communities and how to effectively organize our efforts and our labor.

[Please register for the event here and refer to the Young Worker Summit](#)

Agenda below for a sneak peak of what you can expect at this event. Further details for the event as well as special offers will be found in the registration form! Additionally, registration closes March 1st.



Young Worker Summit Agenda

Friday, Mar 15, 2024

Teamsters Local 455

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 9am | Welcome [Len Harris] |
| 9:10am | Keynote Speaker [TBA] |
| 9:30am | <i>"What is a Union, How to Form One, and Why? How Labor Shapes our History"</i> -Liza Nielsen SBWU, Len Harris AFL-CIO, Robert Lindgren AFL-CIO, Alejo Gonzalez SEIU |
| 10:45am | Break |
| 11am | <i>"The Future of Labor; Threats of an Environmental Change in Climate and AI"</i> -Elena Santarella BGA, Trisha Calvarese, |
| 11:45pm | Networking Lunch |
| 12:45pm | <i>"Civic Engagement, The 2024 Election, and the Power of Regional Organizing"</i> -Kate Kelly New Era, Kiyana Newell "", Kimberly Carracedo "" |
| 1:30pm | <i>"Housing and Public Transportation; Our Communities Connected and at Work"</i> -Len Harris, Carmen Medrano UNE, Omar Ledesma SMART TD |
| 2:15pm | Break |
| 2:30pm | <i>"Tax Equity and Tax Justice; Building our Better World"</i> -Sophie Miriam CFI, Caroline Nutter CFI |
| 3:15pm | <i>"Human Rights are Worker Rights; Bridging Generation Gaps and Creating Greater Solidarity"</i> -Miah NTep NAACP, Jade Kelly CWA, Austin Maier IBEW, Brandon Trykowski IBEW |
| 4:15pm | Closing remarks & next steps |
| 4:30pm | Adjourn |
| 5pm - 7pm | Happy Hour & explore MeowWolf |

"Douglas County Retirees: A Community of Engaged Educators"

By [Bill Hamaker](#)

President of the Douglas County Retirees

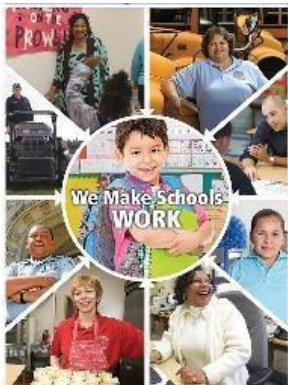
As the president of the Douglas County Retirees and the editor of the AFT Colorado newsletter, I am delighted to share insights into our vibrant community of dedicated retired educators.

Established in 2009, our organization comprises 150 members, who are retired teachers and staff from Douglas County and other districts as well. Our members benefit from AFT's \$1,000,000 liability insurance, a perk extended to regular DCF members, along with numerous other advantages—all at a nominal monthly membership fee. Our goal is to provide support to those continuing the tradition of educational excellence in our schools, while also promoting social engagement.

We achieve this through active participation in various community service projects, school governance committees, high school voter registration drives and local and national elections. Additionally, we come together at planned events, such as our biannual General Membership Meeting & Banquet, hosted at Maggiano's Little Italy. The General Membership Meeting & Banquet serves as a showcase for our ongoing engagement efforts. During our most recent meeting on December 7, 2023, we had the honor of welcoming State Treasurer Dave Young as a guest speaker. His in-depth [presentation](#) covered a broad range of topics, from PERA and TABOR to retirement savings and property taxes. DCF President Lucy Squire took the opportunity to acknowledge our collective efforts in supporting the election of three new school board candidates last November. Kallie Leyba, our AFT Colorado Executive and Political Director, has frequently called upon us to testify at the State Assembly, either in person at the Capitol or remotely (see the picture of DCFR member Tom Yondorf below), addressing legislative matters that impact all retirees.

If you are aware of anyone who has retired from DCSD and would like to join our community, please encourage them to reach out to [me](#) or [Nancy Lawson](#), DCFR Secretary, to become a member. Alternatively, they can easily [enroll online](#) through the DCF website, selecting "Retiree" in the membership category of the online form. Being part of the DCFR not only keeps retirees active but also informed about issues that directly affect retired educators. Join us in this fulfilling journey!






Denver Federation Paraprofessionals and Nutrition Service Employees

We are all wishing Deidre Smith a speedy recovery. Hurry back, we miss you!!

Colorado Federation School Safety Professionals

AFT Local 6541, Colorado Federation School Safety Professionals, Denver Public Schools has two new Officers, Remington McFadden and Daren Barnhard. Congratulations! Since Remington and Daren have taken over the local, they have doubled their membership in size! Hurray! Keep up the good work.




CREDIT CARDS

MORTGAGE PROGRAM


CAR RENTAL

Benefits Designed with AFT Members In Mind

[Learn more at unionplus.org/aft](https://unionplus.org/aft)



A Division of Professional
AFT+
Member Benefits



AFT COLORADO
STANDING TOGETHER: MAKING A DIFFERENCE
Committee on Political Education (COPE) Deduction

925 S. Niagara St., Suite 600, Denver, CO 80224 www.aftcolorado.org 303-947-6709

What is COPE? COPE is how AFT Colorado raises and collects voluntary political contributions from members. COPE is a non-partisan political education committee. These voluntary funds are used statewide to help back candidates and committees that support education and labor. There is one reason AFT Colorado needs to grow our COPE program, **YOU**. With the current economic environment our priorities are vulnerable and are constantly being targeted for reduction. Education budgets, programs, and services are often first on the chopping block when states face dwindling tax revenues. Along with decent working conditions, retirement, and health care. All vitally affect our lives. A strong COPE program will protect our various interests.

At the local level COPE is essential. AFT Colorado will use your voluntary funds to assist in school board races, levies, and referendums in your district. Reductions in state education aid and inflation have made local budgets even more of a challenge. We use COPE dollars to work with labor and education friendly supporters on both sides of the aisle.

FIRST NAME _____ LAST NAME _____

BILLING ADDRESS _____

BILLING CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

HOME PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

MOBILE PHONE _____  wish to receive periodic text messages and accept the associated charges.

HOME EMAIL _____ LOCAL _____

WORK LOCATION _____

PAYMENT

*Due to the associated fees, we prefer that you sign up for **bank draft** payment.*

MONTHLY COPE AMOUNT ☐ \$5 ☐ \$10 ☐ \$15 ☐ \$OTHER _____

BANK

DRAFT ***PREFERRED METHOD*******

Fill out below or simply attach a voided check.

BANK NAME _____

ROUTING NUMBER _____ ACCOUNT NUMBER _____

CREDIT/DEBIT CARD: CARD TYPE: ☐ VISA ☐ MC

NAME ON CARD _____

CARD NUMBER _____ EXP DATE _____

I hereby authorize a monthly contribution to the AFT CO COPE (AFT CO COPE) in the amount indicated above. This authorization is signed freely and voluntarily and not out of any fear of reprisal, and I will not be favored nor disadvantaged because I exercise this right. I understand this money will be used to make political contributions by AFT CO COPE. AFT CO COPE may engage in joint fundraising efforts with AFT COPE and/or the AFL-CIO. This voluntary authorization may be revoked at any time by notifying AFT CO COPE in writing of the desire to do so. Contribution or gifts to AFT CO COPE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions cannot be reimbursed or otherwise paid by any other person or entity.

SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _____