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The fifth week of the 2018 legislative session convened this week. Things here at the Colorado State Capitol seem to be picking up, as bills pass through their first chamber and legislators continue to draft language for the legislative priorities for this year: the budget, health care, PERA and education.

Last week, [HB18-1086](#)—Community College Bachelor Science Degree Nursing—was heard in House Health, Insurance and Environment. The bill has bi-partisan sponsorship with Representatives Buckner and Lundeen and Senators Aguilar and Neville. It allows a community college that is part of the state community college system to offer a Bachelor of Science degree—meaning a 4-year degree—in nursing. Supporters of the bill say this will help address a shortage in nurses that the state is experiencing. However, the 4-year institutions are concerned this may negatively impact their enrollment and want to ensure the community colleges can offer a high-quality education for students. An amendment was added on to the bill in committee which requires data reported by CDHE to dive further into the shortage and ensure that this bill is helping to address the shortage. Progress was made this week as the bill passed second reading in the House on Friday.

[SB18-011](#)—Students Excused from Taking State Assessments—by Senators Kerr and Holbert and Representatives Lundeen and Kraft-Sharp, was heard in the Senate Education committee for its first hearing this Thursday. The bill was laid-over to be voted on next week because committee chairman, Senator Hill, was not present to cast his vote. The bill clarifies that a school district's local education provider determines whether notice from a student's parent to excuse their child from taking a state assessment must be in writing or not. The intent of the bill is to further clarify that students will not face punishment from opting out. This bill has bipartisan support and will most likely make it out of the Senate Education committee next week.

A new bill was introduced this week crafted by 171 superintendents, representing 93% of school districts in Colorado, which outlines a new funding formula for school finance. [HB18-1232](#)—New School Funding Distribution Formula—is sponsored by Representative Young and Senators Kerr and Coram. The leaders of the superintendent's proposal spoke to the Interim Committee on School Finance about their proposed changes to the school finance formula a couple of months ago but have decided to move forward with a bill instead of waiting for the interim committee's action. The big differences in the new formula is that it focuses on funding children with more educational needs—such as, more funding for English-language learners, gifted children, special education, and children in poverty. The bill itself does not appropriate additional dollars into the formula. Instead, the bill only takes effect if voters approve a ballot measure no later than the 2022 statewide general election that increases funding for preschool through high school public education. The bill has not been scheduled for its first committee of reference hearing yet.