

would pay \$258.89/year or \$21.57/month. Calculating one-fifth of that \$100,000 value would be \$51.78/year or \$4.31/month.

D38 residents are smarter than the arguments authored against 4A. We are tired of the harassment and rage that attempt to intimidate our community. Coordinated efforts to deceive us and hurt children have drained themselves of support. Our students deserve the best. Get the facts and join me in voting yes on 4A.

**Cynthia Eversole**

### What you need to know about 2D

As a mother of two small children, I'm worried about the future of the town I've chosen to raise my family in.

Palmer Lake's fire and police departments are underfunded, and infrastructure is crumbling. We lack the funds necessary to sustain the town. This is why the trustees decided to put two measures on the ballot this November. 2C calls for a large property tax increase. 2D asks the voters to allow the two existing medical dispensaries to conduct adult-use cannabis sales as well.

A text was sent to Palmer Lake voters urging us to vote no on 2D "to protect our kids, to back 1st responders, and for less crime." I can't imagine a more uninformed and misleading message. There is no link between a town having adult-use cannabis dispensaries and a negative impact on that community's children. Quite the opposite, actually. Towns that have adult-use cannabis dispensaries have access to more funds to create safer, healthier communities by funding their police, firefighters, parks, roads, and the list goes on. Marijuana is already here. It's legal. It's safe. The only question is whether or not we'll benefit from the tax revenue.

I won't let unfounded, outdated fears dictate my vote. Why should we pay higher property taxes to support our town when there is an option that takes the financial burden off of Palmer Lake residents? Vote no on 2C. Vote yes on 2D! Existing dispensaries, existing locations, no burden on Palmer Lake residents.

**Jessica Farr**

### Yes to 4A

A key feature of our community is a great school district, and at the heart of our schools are our teachers. I have had children in D38 schools for 12 years and have spent most of those years volunteering—from room mom to PTO to Building Advisory Committee and beyond. I've been able to be in the schools and support my kids. What I have seen are teachers who work long hours and give of their personal lives to make sure that our kids excel. We ask them to educate our children as well as love and care for our children, and yet we feel as though they should do this without a competitive wage and even sometimes at their own expense. Despite our district drawing national media coverage last year, our community has continued to deny ballot measures for education funding. Instead, our district and our teachers have been maligned and left disappointed by a small group of loud community members whose negative rhetoric has dominated our voting. As a result, I've comforted my children over and over when their teachers have left for better opportunities, and I've helped a teenager spend his own money to give his teacher a "little extra" as a thank you for being a great teacher.

Through it all, our teachers have continued to show up. Our community needs to do the same. Colorado education funding is a local issue. We decide the value of our schools and we can choose to fund our district. Our district is falling further behind every year that we continue to undervalue our greatest asset and our children will be the ones to bear the consequences. It's time to make a change. For our community, for our teachers, and for our children, say yes to 4A.

**Angela Jones**

### Thanks to the Kiwanis Monument Foundation

Thank you to the Kiwanis Monument Foundation for granting me the money to purchase individual student graphing whiteboards! I am so grateful to have the Monument Foundation's support to purchase these graphing whiteboards for my students to use in math class. Academic achievement is one of Lewis-Palmer High School's Pillars of Excellence. These individual student whiteboards are great for increasing student participation in a low-stress manner, ultimately increasing student achievement. My students love when we use them in class! Thank you so much for your support!!

**Molly Ketchell**

*Lewis-Palmer High School math teacher*

### Local investment is the only way forward

As a longtime resident of this community, a homeowner, and parent, I believe in doing the research. That's why I've dug into the ask in front of us as taxpayers, and after learning the facts (with none of the fluff), I'm wholeheartedly supportive of 4A.

Our community schools, as well as our charter school, are under a funding crunch, and it's not one of their own creation. They are funded, for the most part, by the State of Colorado, not by local taxpayers. Despite what is printed on your tax bills, the State of Colorado collects, then redistributes those funds across the state to fund education. While we have seen our tax bills increase over time, D38 has not necessarily received those funds in an equitable way.

Any time the state increases funding, it increases funding for all districts. This brings context to what I've heard

from district leadership when they have said funding is 10% lower than surrounding districts. Even though funding has gone up, it goes up for all districts, and I understand they (for the most part) invest those funds in compensation for teachers.

Still, our district is down about 10% in compensation for teachers, and this ask under 4A is a direct way for us to invest in teachers and staff who help our children find future success.

Remember, even if state funding goes up after 4A, all districts will use it, and likely on compensation.

**Karen Lewandowski**

### Vote yes on MLO

Teachers' work matters. "Getting by" with paying staff low pay versus providing our youngest children with the best professional care all for the sake of lower taxes is not effective and will, in fact, cost all of us more when these students vote, provide your health services, or don't provide to the economy the way the generation before them did.

Staff at D38 can spend more time with our children than their parents do during the week. This time and support should be incentivized to get the best possible applicants every time, for every job, to show our kids their lives matter. There are 50 unfilled positions in our school district right now. Capitalism states that to get people to stay and to have high-quality applicants for openings, you must raise incentives.

Will we find people to replace our knowledgeable and supportive staff when they leave? Since the standards keep lowering for those able to be with our children versus increasing applicants by providing a higher wage, sure, there will be an adult in the classroom (class size to be determined). Will the education a student receives here prepare them for the competitive global market or represent our values of democracy and critical thinking? Will this staff member connect with students to support them and show them they matter? Will they be able to catch problematic behavior for the health and safety of all? Odds are against us if this MLO does not pass since there are fewer education graduates, fewer staying in the field and even fewer who would pick to do the same work here for thousands less than elsewhere.

These students deserve every opportunity and ounce of support we can give them in this world. They matter that much.

**Stephanie Markle**

*Teacher and parent in D38*

### D38 mill levy

I am not excited to vote to raise my taxes for any reason. I was stung by my property tax increase this year as I am sure you all were. As a senior citizen, I have no way to increase my income short of a part-time job. But the mill levy for teacher salaries needs to pass. All you have to do is read the Gazette about D38 and other districts struggling to find certified and classified staff. What teachers make in D38 is not equivalent to any close district. A teacher in D38 with 15 years and a master's degree will make \$56,763. The average salary in Cherry Creek is \$88,000. I predicted the teacher shortage years ago, but the "naysayers" either didn't believe me or didn't care. Now, it is simply a case of supply and demand. Simple economics. Read the Gazette about the lack of pay in D38. Where do you think teachers will apply? District 11 is offering \$2,500 bonuses to prospective teachers and is short 100-plus teachers and they pay more. We indeed are impacted by the teacher shortage and other districts that pay more. Someone claimed D38 received an extra \$2 million last year. That sounds like a lot, but divided by 422 teachers, and money for classified staff (838 people—not counting any building or central administrator salaries), that comes to \$99/month for everyone after taxes. Not enough. That money also doesn't address facilities, maintenance, and other issues. The mill levy needs to pass.

**Terry A. Miller**

### The 4A facts

I would like to share a story: Let's finally work with facts about 4A.

Speaking to an educator who started with D38 23 years ago (why is that important?). That is the last time D38 approved an MLO.

She was hired at \$27,180 as a third-year teacher. She paid \$750 for a two-bedroom one-bath house in downtown Monument. Starting salary for a third-year teacher now in D38 is \$39,360. On Zillow, that same place rents for \$1,525/month. Do the math.

A second teacher, when she left last spring, said, "I am about to finish my master's and I want to move out of mom's basement, I can't afford to work and live in D38." Even with a master's degree, she couldn't afford it.

More facts: Not just signs.

The 400 kids. This is not about 400 students. This MLO is about teachers' salaries. Read the MLO.

Slush fund. There is no slush fund. Facts. This money will be treated exactly like the 1999 MLO (\$4 million). There will be a community-run committee making sure that the money is allocated to the purpose. By law, this money is only for salaries of teachers, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals—not admin. Read the MLO.

Assessed value. The MLO increase is only determined by the assessed value of your home. How much? ~\$400/year for the average D38 home.

This MLO is not a sequel. Fact. This is entirely directed to teacher and support staff salary. Read the MLO.

Waste of money? Is paying to retain good teachers, good education, and keeping our housing values the highest in the region a waste of money?

It's time to pay up for D38. It's been too long. Ask yourself. How many districts in the state have gone this long?

**Bill Normile**

### You get what you pay for

I have been a Monument resident for the past 26 years, and both my kids went through the K-12 D38 school system. During that time, I've witnessed a number of D38 struggles to include failed MLO initiatives, superintendent retention "issues," and capital expenditure fiascos which I suspect is the root cause for most of the negative press surrounding the current MLO initiative. However, the current MLO is specifically written to address the below-average pay of our D38 teachers who, in my opinion, are doing a yeoman's job in trying to educate future generations with insufficient financial support from both the government and residents. There is no dispute from the MLO naysayers that our teachers are, in fact, underpaid—they just don't want to pay more to rectify it. Do we wait until D38 loses their accreditation due to the high turnover rate of experienced teachers before we take action? In other words, would you expect the Broncos to make the playoffs on a regular basis while the rooster is increasingly filled with rookies? I think not. And I trust it's not necessary to discuss another fact that property values are correlated to the quality of the district's education system. These are our kids and future leaders were talking about, and they should be provided the best education we can afford, and teachers are key to achieving that. It would be very unfortunate for all of us if the MLO doesn't pass and we continue to lose experienced teachers to other districts that understand the true value and cost of quality education.

**Tim O'Grady**

### 4A is no slush fund—it means a raise for our teachers!

Opponents of 4A call it a "slush fund." The definition of a "slush fund" varies slightly, but it typically refers to "money set aside with no designated purpose." (Investopedia)

Besides knowing that District 38 and Monument Academy need additional funding to stay competitive, I wanted to know if my tax dollars are being designated for a specific purpose. Some who are opposed to 4A claim the money will not be used to increase pay for teachers and staff.

I did some research, and it turns out that salaries in all school districts are paid out of the General Fund. For a mill levy override, like 4A, funds must legally be placed in the General Fund.

This doesn't mean the funding can't be tracked. Districts can show every dollar from a mill levy override, and District 38 promises to do so with 4A. The ballot language states this funding must be used "expressly and solely for" teacher and support staff compensation, excluding administrators. This is binding by law and funds cannot be used for any other purpose.

It is clear the 4A MLO funds will be used to pay teachers and support staff, excluding administration. Furthermore, D38 is prioritizing positions that experience the highest turnover and those with direct, student impact. All our teachers and staff are long overdue for a raise. D38 is doing what they can to provide those funds and now it's up to voters to make it happen.

If you have any doubts about supporting 4A, please do the research. I wanted to share what I learned. It is clear 4A is no slush fund! Please join me and vote yes on 4A. Our teachers and staff deserve it!

**Diana O'Toole**

### An objective look at the D38 MLO question

With respect for our community, we are co-authoring this letter to clarify the at times confusing topic of local property taxes.

Local measure 4A simply asks: Have Lewis-Palmer School District 38 teachers and non-administrator staff earned a pay increase to a level commensurate with their peers in neighboring districts?

This measure seeks to raise \$5.5 million expressly and solely for teacher/staff pay. No executives nor administrators will be eligible. Approximately \$1 million of these funds will go to Monument Academy as well—based on their share of district enrollment.

To calculate the tax change: 1. On your property tax bill or notice of valuation from the El Paso County Assessor, find the "Actual Value." 2. Multiply that by the assessment rate (6.95% in 2022) to identify your "Assessed Value." 3. Multiply the Assessed Value by the mill rate (7.450) divided by 1,000, for the annual tax amount. Example: \$500,000 x .0695 = \$34,750 x (7.45 ÷ 1,000) = \$258.89 per year, or \$21.57 per month.

Property taxes are calculated from the El Paso County Assessor's valuation of each property. This figure is less than current real estate market values. Our analysis determined that the assessor's "Actual Value" is approximately 35% below what Zillow.com estimates.

Both the D38 and Monument Academy School Boards felt this issue worthy of stakeholder attention as it yields a significant impact to the system and, by extension, all students in D38. The data above is accurate, factual, and vetted by local, county, CPA, and legal officials. D38 is committed to providing detailed accounting of the funding from its ori-