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Report calls for new state oversight of online schools

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By Berny Morson, Rocky Mountain News

A report released today by a private foundation calls for stronger state oversight of online schools, including a new division of online learning in the Colorado Department of Education.

The report does not recommend closing the 79 "learning centers" opened in school districts around the state by the Hope Online Learning Academy Co-op. Instead, the centers would come under the new regulatory division and would have to improve coordination with school districts in which the centers are located.

The report was authored by a committee headed by University of Colorado associate law school dean Lorenzo Trujillo. It was published by the Donnell-Kay Foundation.

Sen. Sue Windels, D-Arvada, the chairwoman of the Senate Education Committee, has said the report will be the basis for a bill she will introduce, probably next week.

Hope is headquartered in Centennial, but is chartered by the Vilas School district. Some educators have questioned whether the tiny school district, with an enrollment of about 100 students, can adequately oversee Hope, with more than 3,800 students. State auditors were critical of Hope in December.

Hope officials have said the violations cited by the auditors have since been corrected.

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