

CHAPTER 472

PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSE BILL 24-1009

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Joseph and McLachlan, Amabile, Bacon, Bird, Boesenecker, Brown, Clifford, Daugherty, Duran, Epps, Froelich, Garcia, Hamrick, Hernandez, Herod, Jodeh, Kipp, Lieder, Lindsay, Lindstedt, Lukens, Mabrey, Martinez, Marvin, Mauro, McCormick, Ortiz, Parenti, Ricks, Rutinel, Sirota, Snyder, Story, Titone, Valdez, Velasco, Vigil, Weissman, Willford, Young, McCluskie;
also SENATOR(S) Ginal and Rich, Bridges, Buckner, Cutter, Exum, Fields, Gonzales, Jaquez Lewis, Kolker, Marchman, Michaelson Jenet, Priola, Winter F., Zenzinger.

AN ACT

CONCERNING REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO PROVIDE CHILD CARE LICENSING RESOURCES IN PREVALENT LANGUAGES, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds and declares that:

- (a) All Colorado children are entitled to quality child care and education services;
- (b) Quality early care and education contribute to the development of cognitive and social-emotional skills, including attentiveness, persistence, motivation, self-control, and teamwork;
- (c) The child care sector in Colorado is too limited to serve all of the young children in the state who need care. Large portions of Colorado, especially rural areas, are licensed child care deserts where, regardless of cost, families cannot find local services for their children.
- (d) According to the Bell Policy Center, the total capacity for licensed child care is for 156,691 children in Colorado, while there are 231,993 children under six years of age with all parents in the workforce. This is a gap of 75,302 children who do not have an available licensed child care provider.

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

(e) In response to these challenges and in support of the mission of the department of early childhood to ensure the delivery of a comprehensive, community-informed, data-driven, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education, and well-being of all of Colorado's young children, their families, and early childhood professionals in all settings, the state has an obligation to promote greater access to child care by expanding the provider pool.

(2) The general assembly also finds and declares that:

(a) The department of early childhood must update its mobile licensing application to offer fair access to resources in prevalent languages, ultimately facilitating the process for providers to become licensed;

(b) This act represents the state's commitment to addressing the critical need for accessible licensing services in prevalent languages, serving as a testament to the state's dedication to ensuring equitable access to child care licensing resources and support; and

(c) Early care and education programs are a cornerstone of child development, and language should not be a barrier to access to care for children across Colorado.

(3) Therefore, the general assembly declares that:

(a) The general assembly affirms the vital role of a culturally and linguistically diverse child care provider population in addressing the multifaceted needs of Colorado's diverse communities;

(b) The department of early childhood shall be required to provide licensing services in prevalent languages in order to ensure fair access to the child care licensing process;

(c) There shall be a bilingual licensing unit within the department of early childhood; and

(d) The department of early childhood shall update its mobile licensing application accordingly.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 26.5-5-303, **add** (20.3) and (20.5) as follows:

26.5-5-303. Definitions. As used in this part 3, unless the context otherwise requires:

(20.3) "PLAIN LANGUAGE" MEANS WRITING THAT IS CLEAR, CONCISE, WELL-ORGANIZED, AND THAT FOLLOWS OTHER BEST PRACTICES APPROPRIATE TO THE SUBJECT OR FIELD AND INTENDED AUDIENCE, AS DEFINED BY THE FEDERAL "PLAIN WRITING ACT OF 2010", PUB.L. 111-274.

(20.5) "PREVALENT LANGUAGES" MEANS THE TWO MOST PREVALENT LANGUAGES

SPOKEN IN THE STATE OF COLORADO, AS IDENTIFIED IN THE LATEST AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY PUBLISHED BY THE FEDERAL CENSUS BUREAU.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 26.5-5-304, **amend** (4) as follows:

26.5-5-304. Application of part - definition - repeal. (4) The department shall provide education and information in an accessible manner, IN PLAIN LANGUAGE, AND IN PREVALENT LANGUAGES on the state licensing website for child care providers who are exempt pursuant to this section but are interested in becoming a licensed child care provider.

SECTION 4. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 26.5-5-309, **add** (7) as follows:

26.5-5-309. Licenses - rules - definition - appropriation - repeal. (7) (a) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL, TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE, PROVIDE ESSENTIAL RESOURCES IN PREVALENT LANGUAGES TO HELP CHILD CARE PROVIDERS AND PROSPECTIVE PROVIDERS COMPLETE THE NECESSARY PAPERWORK TO MEET CHILD CARE LICENSING COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REVIEW EXISTING RESOURCES AND ENSURE THAT THE ENGLISH VERSIONS ARE WRITTEN IN PLAIN LANGUAGE TO FACILITATE THE TRANSLATION OF THESE RESOURCES INTO PREVALENT LANGUAGES. THE DEPARTMENT MAY PROVIDE ESSENTIAL RESOURCES IN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES AS NEEDED IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF COLORADO COMMUNITIES, SUBJECT TO AVAILABLE APPROPRIATIONS.

(b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL, TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE, ENGAGE IN OUTREACH AND MAINTAIN COMMUNICATIONS IN PREVALENT LANGUAGES WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS WHO PROVIDE, ARE CONSIDERING PROVIDING, OR ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF THOSE PROVIDING LICENSED EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO FOSTER A MORE CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PROVIDER POPULATION.

(c) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL PROVIDE SERVICES IN PREVALENT LANGUAGES TO INDIVIDUALS SEEKING TO OPEN OR OTHERWISE PARTICIPATE IN THE OPERATION OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM OR FACILITY LICENSED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

(d) (I) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL UPDATE ITS MOBILE LICENSING APPLICATION TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION IN PREVALENT LANGUAGES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SUBSECTION (7). FOR THE 2024-25 STATE FISCAL YEAR, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL APPROPRIATE FORTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE DEPARTMENT FROM THE GENERAL FUND TO PAY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS SUBSECTION (7)(d).

(II) THIS SUBSECTION (7)(d) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JUNE 20, 2026.

(e) (I) ON OR BEFORE MARCH 30, 2026, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE, THE PUBLIC AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE, OR ANY SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES, CONCERNING BARRIERS FACED BY INDIVIDUALS WHO SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH IN BECOMING LICENSED CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.

(II) THIS SUBSECTION (7)(e) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JUNE 20, 2026.

SECTION 5. In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 26.5-5-330 as follows:

26.5-5-330. Bilingual licensing unit - appropriation. (1) THE BILINGUAL LICENSING UNIT IS CREATED IN THE DEPARTMENT TO FACILITATE THE SATISFACTION OF THE DEPARTMENT'S DUTIES DESCRIBED IN SECTION 26.5-5-309 (7).

(2) FOR THE 2024-25 STATE FISCAL YEAR AND EACH STATE FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL APPROPRIATE TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE DEPARTMENT FROM THE GENERAL FUND TO PAY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BILINGUAL LICENSING UNIT CREATED IN SUBSECTION (1) OF THIS SECTION.

SECTION 6. Appropriation. For the 2024-25 state fiscal year, \$280,928 is appropriated to the department of early childhood for use by the licensing and administration division. This appropriation is from the general fund and is based on an assumption that the division will require an additional 2.7 FTE. To implement this act, the division may use this appropriation for the bilingual licensing unit.

SECTION 7. Safety clause. The general assembly finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for the support and maintenance of the departments of the state and state institutions.

Approved: June 6, 2024