

Testimony in favor of House Bill 22-1295
Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool
Senate Education Committee
March 31, 2022

Chair Bridges, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of House Bill 22-1295, for the Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool.

I am Kelly Fugate. I own Sister Sister Child Care in Colorado Springs. This is a five-star rated in-home child care center, in which my colleagues and I provide care for fourteen children ages two months to five years old. We also offer Early Head Start and Head Start. I am also a Save the Children Action Network advocate.

For 22 years, I have been an in-home child care provider. I have cared for approximately 150 kids. I love my work.

The growth and development I see in the children I care for sustains me in my profession. Recently, a child came to our home at 22 months old. He was experiencing a variety of developmental delays and could not walk. Now, he walks, sings, and talks. The care we offered him, at Sister Sister, was instrumental. My colleagues and I were deeply moved the day he took his first steps. We are committed to helping the children in our care to learn, grow, and thrive.

Across Colorado, childcare providers and parents are doing all they can for young children, but they need help. Our current approach to early care in Colorado is fragmented and creates gaps that leave children without the care they need, and parents without the support they seek.

For example, I receive between 5 and 20 calls per week from parents seeking care for their children. I have a long wait list of families seeking care for their children. Currently, space on my waitlist will likely not open for one to two years.

This is a reality across our state. More than 50 percent of Coloradans live in childcare deserts. In fact, I work with families who drive more than 30 miles to leave their children in my care because childcare closer to home is unavailable.

Over the past 22 years, I have seen that families with children with disabilities, in particular, face significant hurdles to finding early education and child care. Securing child care and consistent support services is daunting. From my vantage point, I see children with disabilities missing out on the services they need, early on. Colorado must do more to provide services, resources, child care and early education to young children.

Colorado does not have enough childcare to meet demand, and families do not have the adequate tools, information or systems they need to find, evaluate and secure the child care that is available.

I believe House Bill 22-1295 will achieve great things for early childhood in Colorado by:

- Making early childhood, including childcare, more easy to navigate for families.

- Supporting a mixed delivery system, including community based, home-based, and school-based providers.
- Requiring local coordination between providers, counties, school districts, and local providers, and community-based organizations.

This legislation gives Colorado the chance to create more, and more equitable access to, quality early childhood experiences by codifying the unanimous recommendations made for the Department of Early Childhood by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission.

Parents and childcare providers want what is best for children. House Bill 22-1295 represents change for kids, and an opportunity to build systems that will help families and children in our state to thrive from birth to age five in Colorado.

I ask that you vote “yes” on House Bill 22-1295.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kelly Fugate



To: Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee
From: Khatira Amn, Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning
Date: March 31, 2022
Re: Support for HB22-1295

Mister Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Khatira Amn and I work with Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning as an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Policy Advocate, helping to create opportunities for dual language learner families in accessing early childhood education. Dual language learners are children who have at least one parent/caregiver who speaks a language other than English at home. They comprise 28% of children ages 0-8 in Colorado. Spring Institute is a nationally-recognized provider of effective intercultural learning programs and services with the mission of empowering people and organizations to succeed across languages and cultures.

I see everyday through Spring Institute's work serving 1000+ immigrants and refugees annually through its various programs that early childhood education access is a major concern and challenge for the dual language learner, immigrant and refugee population. Early childhood is a critical period in development that dramatically shapes a child's subsequent education and life experiences. The early years of life are when the foundation of brain architecture is being put into place and the quality of a child's early experiences can either positively or negatively change their academic and life outcomes.

Our youngest children are most likely to live in poverty, most likely to experience homelessness, achievement gaps, and least likely to have access to child care and preschool. There simply is not enough capacity in the public education system to serve all children who want to attend preschool. Colorado needs all licensed preschool providers, in all settings, to meet our goal of ensuring access for all children and families who want to participate.

Like all parents, immigrant and refugee parents want the best for their children and understand that quality education is tremendously important for their children's development and cultural integration. Unfortunately, the



shortage of quality, affordable, culturally competent early child care programs in Colorado means that nearly 60% of dual language learner children ages 3-4 are *not* enrolled in a pre-K program. This limits parents' workforce opportunities while kids miss out on early learning experiences and brain development that are foundational to Kindergarten readiness.

HB22-1295 codifies the unanimous recommendations of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission by ensuring:

- **Effective Governance:** Integrates programs that impact young children and their families under one department to provide a seamless experience for families, while ensuring that families have an authentic voice in the governance of the department.
- **Universal Access and Equity:** Provides universal access to a range of high-quality preschool options, including school- and community-based programs, while also prioritizing additional resources for low-income and at-risk children.
- **Family-Centeredness:** Ensures families can easily navigate family support programs as well as childcare and preschool

An investment in early childhood care and education is truly an investment in Colorado's future. By supporting these policy changes, we can help promote alignment and quality, expand access to high-quality, voluntary, affordable early childhood opportunities, support parents in accessing programs and services, coordinate the availability of services, promote equitable delivery of resources, and unify the fragmented administration of early childhood services to reduce duplicative oversight and administrative burden on families, providers, and educators.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to Colorado's families and please vote YES on HB22-1295.



March 31, 2022

RE: Support for HB 22-1295

Dear Chair Bridges and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

On behalf of Children's Hospital Colorado, we are writing today to urge your support of HB22-1295. Early childhood is a foundational period that dramatically shapes a child's development, health and life experiences. The creation of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood represents a monumental opportunity to align early childhood services through one centralized state agency.

Children's Hospital Colorado is proud to partner with the community to advocate for the health and well-being of kids and families. Our work goes beyond our hospital walls and into the communities we serve. Over the years, Children's Hospital Colorado has led many two-generation initiatives such as maternal-child healthcare provider outreach and education on infant and child mental health, early childhood home visiting programs delivered in the pediatric primary care medical home, universal psychosocial screenings and public awareness campaigns about early childhood. Our organization was proud to support Proposition EE which voters approved in 2018, establishing the funding mechanisms for universal preschool, and we are pleased to see this bill come to fruition.

HB22-1295 is a monumental opportunity for Colorado to unify early childhood services and programs across many state agencies with various eligibility requirements and funding streams. The current model can create challenges for parents and providers working to navigate these programs. By establishing Local Coordinating Organizations in the bill, this could help eliminate the fragmented structure of early childhood programs to more adequately and equitably serve children and families to ensure the strong foundation Colorado children need to flourish.

As you may know, HB22-1295 will transition early childhood mental health programs as well as home visitation and family strengthening programs to the new agency. The bill sets up an advisory structure that will be inclusive of early childhood health and mental health expertise which we believe will help ensure this remains a priority for the new agency. We sincerely appreciate the integration of these aspects into HB22-1295, and once adopted, we look forward to working with our partners in early childhood education to continue to elevate the importance of health and well-being as the Department is implemented.

We applaud Governor Polis and the bill sponsors, Senator Buckner and President Fenberg, for bringing their leadership and vision to HB22-1295. Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and we hope that you will join us in supporting HB22-1295.

Sincerely,

Zach Zaslow
Director of Government Affairs and Medicaid Strategy
Zach.Zaslow@childrenscolorado.org

Ayelet Talmi, PhD, IMH-E
Director, Section of Integrated Behavioral Health, Division of Child and Adolescent Mental Health
Director, Project CLIMB
Director, Harris Program in Infant Mental Health
Children's Hospital Colorado
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Affiliated with
 University of Colorado
Anschutz Medical Campus

Senate Education
 03/31/2022 01:30 PM
 HB22-1295 Dept. Early Childhood & Universal Preschool Prog
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Vail Shoultz-McCole For Self	<p>Chair and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide personal testimony in favor of Bill 22-1295, for the Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool. I have faith this bill will bring positive changes for families, children, and the workforce across our state.</p> <p>For more than 30 years I have worked in the field of early care and education. From owning a Family Child Care Home business for 12 years, to working in an Elementary school, to providing coaching and mentoring supports. Currently I am a college early childhood education instructor on the Western Slope. Recently I was invited to sit on the State Transition Group that focused on Children with Special needs along with providing feedback on Workforce Development.</p> <p>I have observed families struggle to find quality accessible inclusive care and education. Watched passionate teachers leave the field because of lack of health care benefits, low wages, and burnout from long hours paired with the high demand for trainings and alignment with regulations. Some examples are:</p> <p>A previous college student and highly qualified teacher had to change careers not because she was burned out but because she was at risk of losing her home due to her low wages. She returned to being a beautician.</p> <p>A family friend confided in me that the facility where she was taking her child locked parents out of the building. She realized that this was not a quality setting and was able to find another facility within a month but not all parents are this lucky.</p> <p>A local childcare centers I coach wants to offer health care and other benefits for their staff but would have to raise parent fees. The center works with a significant number of families on Child Care Assistance Program which has a set reimbursement cap, thus the private pay parents would have to bear the increase alone.</p> <p>I believe Bill 1295 will help address these and other challenges. This legislation has the potential to set Colorado on the right path for kids and families, allowing our state to build a system in which young children can learn, grow, and thrive. Parent’s can feel secure when leaving their child in another's care. Each community’s workforce will expand both in quality and quantity to meet the needs of our children.</p>

	<p>I ask that you vote “yes” on House Bill 22-1295. Thank you for your consideration.</p>
<p>Rusha Lev For Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics</p>	<p>I am a pediatrician at a large FQHC in Denver and work in primary care at one of the outpatient clinics. I am an active member of the Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am also a board member of Mile High Early Learning Center. I am writing today to voice my strong support for HB22-1295. After months of stakeholder engagement and meetings with parents, providers and community members, we as a state have the opportunity with this bill to codify the unanimous recommendations of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission regarding the design of the new state agency and the implementation of universal preschool in Colorado.</p> <p>I care for patients and families who are generally Medicaid or under/uninsured and who generally struggle to provide their young children with consistent and robust childcare and early learning. So many of the children I care for will benefit immensely from an opportunity to attend preschool in various settings. My own four children attended a home daycare and then a private preschool and this allowed me to work and gave them early socialization and introduction to language and learning and I am forever grateful to the providers and the opportunities for my children. This bill gives all Colorado parents a similar choice for their children to receive a mixed delivery system for early learning and eases their navigation of the process. It also addresses capacity challenges and ensures state resources will fund high-quality programs.</p> <p>Thank you for your work on the House Education Committee and for prioritizing this legislation.</p> <p>Rusha Lev, MD, FAAP</p>
<p>Diana Herrera For Self</p>	<p>My name is Diana Herrera. Thank you for allowing me to express my excitement for this legislation and the efforts on behalf of providers.</p> <p>I am speaking today to highlight the importance of creating a unified system of Early Childhood in Colorado from the providers perspective. I work at a nonprofit, high quality early childhood program that also serves children with disabilities and support needs called Bal Swan. We have a unique inclusive model that also provides therapy services to those children who need it.</p> <p>As a provider, I am acutely aware of the fragmented state of our early childhood programs and services that impact families and make our job currently so stressful. For example, to keep the tuition cost as low as possible for our families, we currently navigate funding sources such as the Colorado Childcare Assistance Program, which is administered by the Office of Early Childhood, the Colorado Preschool Program, which is administered by CDE, funding through grants, which could come from private entities (such as the Buell foundation), or from federal sources,</p>

	<p>administered by CDHS. We then also must navigate early intervention services, special education services, insurance reimbursements and Medicaid payments to cover therapy costs.</p> <p>You can imagine how difficult it is to navigate all these different systems just to be able to offer a high-quality preschool program to families who desperately need the education and care for their children, let alone what this navigation looks like for families. Unifying all systems under the new Department of Early Childhood would allow providers and families ONE point of contact for all funding and early childhood education needs.</p> <p>By orienting toward a whole-child, whole-family approach to services and supports, the Department of Early Childhood will create a mixed delivery model for universal PreK, where families could choose between a school district program or a community-based one, that they already may be a part of.</p> <p>Therefore, representing Early Childhood providers in Colorado, I urge you today to pass house bill 1295 and unify the programs and services so all Colorado families have a healthy, strong start. Providers like myself are ready for systemic change in Colorado and we hope you are, too!</p> <p>Thank you, Diana</p>
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I'm a mother of two boys at ages 6 years and 4 years old. Both have attended the Head Start program in Boulder County. Thanks to the hours of care that Head Start offered me, Full Time care; I could start working and thus complement my husband's low salary. Now, I feel a more productive woman because I contribute value to the economy of my family, which in transforms into contribution to the country's economy through the payment of my taxes.

To enter context, when my son Jacob began in Head Start, we noticed that he was a bit late with his speech, when we compared with his older brother and other kids to the same age. We, at home practice two languages, particularly I speak more in Spanish than in English. But Jacob didn't pronounce words in any of the two languages.

It's there, where Head Start helped me to connect with school district language therapists, who acted immediately so that Jacob would begin his therapy because he was diagnosed with speech disabilities.

My son is receiving this therapy within the facilities of Head Start since October 2021, and it's impressive the speed with which he has advanced and improved in both languages, despite the therapy is completely in English and fortune is within his daily environment.

This group of therapists offered to change Jacob to the childcare of the BVSD where he would be at the same school as my eldest son (What makes me easier to pick up both in the same school), Plus receiving his speech therapy, Plus would receive a bilingual therapy; it was a tempting offer BUT daily care was only for 3 hours.

Make that change, from Head Start to BVSD, reducing my option to be able to work. If now that I am working, and we continue below the poverty line, we would be much poorer if I didn't have the option to work.

In my opinion, it's very useful for families to be able to receive both opportunities; especially for families we have children with disabilities, it's reassuring as parents being able to have quality care for hours equivalent to a working day, and also could receive specialized care for children with disabilities.

Thanks to the combination of both contributions in one place, now Jacob will start in the school system much easier. Because he will enter Kindergarten on the next school year 2022-2023 with a better speech command, which facilitates the day of interaction with the new teachers and friends.

Preschool children learn much faster at an early age. It's important to help them on time

I'm sure that all of you, the bipartisan way will first think deeply in the welfare of children, children with disabilities and that families have support too.



Jennifer Barbera
Boulder, March 30, 2022



Senate Education Committee
Colorado State Capitol

March 31, 2022

The Colorado Home Visiting Coalition is a nearly 30-year-old coalition of leadership organizations representing the statewide and local level needs of many early childhood home visiting programs. We collaborate to strengthen and advance effective home visiting services across Colorado. We would like to express our support for HB22-1295 – The Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program bill.

We believe that home visiting programs that focus on prevention during the early childhood years are an integral part of Colorado's early childhood system and the home visiting service array is best placed within this new Department as part of Colorado's continuum of early childhood supports and services. Colorado will be able to achieve its vision of creating a truly seamless early childhood system by moving all programs in the Office of Early Childhood into the new Department of Early Childhood. We appreciate that family strengthening, and family support programs have been fully integrated into the vision of this new department and that this holistic vision conceptualized through stakeholder input will best support the "whole child" and the "whole family." This is the path that Colorado needs to take in order to help our young children and families thrive.

We urge you to support this extremely important legislation that will transform the early childhood system in Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Knudtson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Laura Knudtson

Director
The Colorado Home Visiting Coalition



Senate Education Committee
Colorado State Capitol

March 31, 2022

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We urge you to support this extremely important legislation that will transform the early childhood system in Colorado.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Knudtson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Laura Knudtson

Director
The Colorado Home Visiting Coalition



March 31, 2022

Testimony for HB22-1259

Thank you Chair, and members of the Committee:

My name is Carrie Kennedy, and I have been a home-based child care provider in Jefferson County for over 22 years and currently hold a Colorado Shines level 5 for my program. I also serve as the public relations coordinator of the Colorado Association of Family Child Care (CAFCC). As a representative of CAFCC and the estimated 1,500 licensed family child care home (FCCH) providers in Colorado, I am here today to ask that you take on this task with a critical lens and use this bill to create positive change that can truly have an impact on Colorado's young children and their families. HB22-1259 has the opportunity to make changes in the lives of Colorado's children and families that could have lasting positive effects for years to come!

I would like to speak to the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) and some of the issues that HB22-1259 can help address and correct. I first connected with the CCCAP program as a Qualified Exempt Provider in 2000 when I cared for my son and two young nieces. My sister in law was a young, single mom who could not afford or find child care to meet her needs. At that time, CCCAP paid \$9.50 per day for each of my nieces. This was not enough income for me to even purchase groceries for my family, but it was more than what my sister in law could afford to pay me, so it benefited both of us at the time. I worked on becoming a licensed family child care home at which point my daily CCCAP reimbursement rate was increased. Again, this was nowhere close to what I could have earned by caring for children with private pay families.

Fast forward 22 years, my business has grown, and I now have a list of infants and toddlers waiting for an opening in my program. While this is good for me, it's not good for the families



utilizing CCCAP in my area. They cannot afford to wait for an opening in my program and are faced with the daunting tasks of “cold-calling” programs from a very, very small list that accept CCCAP. These families are then forced to take whatever limited early childhood care and education that is available to them so they can either attend school or go to work to try to improve their family’s situation and future. This is not right! Each and every child and family in Colorado deserves to find a high quality program that meets their family’s needs.

Licensed family child care home providers face the same issues as centers and also tend to limit CCCAP slots in their programs due to the low subsidy rate and rules surrounding payments. In recent years, CCCAP began to offer slightly higher rates to programs that have a Colorado Shines rating of 3, 4 or 5. At first glance this appears to value high quality, however, in many counties, a Colorado Shines Level 4 or 5 family child care home is also paid LESS for a child birth-36 months than a Colorado Shines Level 1 or 2 center. In a mixed delivery system, reimbursement rates should reflect the quality of care *regardless* of the setting. Simply put, a child is a child no matter where the parents choose to take them. And family child care homes have a proven track record of being dedicated community members and quality providers for our children.

CCCAP reimbursement is often a fraction of the previous year’s market rate and attendance payment policies hurt programs, pushing them away from accepting CCCAP instead of attracting them. When we tie how much we pay providers to offer quality care to market rate surveys, we reinforce the inequity that communities with fewer resources continue to see, with less being invested in the quality of their children’s early care and education.

One solution is a change that would allow for a rate calculation to be based on a cost estimation approach instead of the current market rate survey approach. HB22-1259 has the opportunity to make changes– changes that will greatly benefit the children and families who need it the most. I envision and hope for a future where the highest quality early childhood



education programs fight for the opportunity to accept children on the CCCAP program. This bill could make the difference they need!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about this issue. As you move forward with issues concerning early childhood education, please see CAFCC as an ally in the fight for a better system and a resource. I am available for questions.



EXAMPLES:

Jefferson	CENTER	0-18 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 68.76
	CENTER	0-18 months	Tier 3	\$ 75.06
	CENTER	0-18 months	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 81.93
	CENTER	18-36 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 57.24
	CENTER	18-36 months	Tier 3	\$ 66.37
	CENTER	18-36 months	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 73.00
	CENTER	36 months to 6 years	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 51.60
	CENTER	36 months to 6 years	Tier 3	\$ 63.96
	CENTER	36 months to 6 years	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 70.94
	HOME	0-24 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 44.07
	HOME	0-24 months	Tier 3	\$ 48.47
	HOME	0-24 months	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 55.08
	HOME	24 months to 6 years	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 37.00
	HOME	24 months to 6 years	Tier 3	\$ 44.07
	HOME	24 months to 6 years	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 49.58



Adams	CENTER	0-18 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 66.75
	CENTER	18-36 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 50.33
	CENTER	36 months to 6 yrs	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 37.08
	HOME	0-24 months	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 48.37
	HOME	24 mos to 6 yrs	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 45.95
Boulder	CENTER	0-18 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 69.33
	CENTER	18-36 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 59.45
	CENTER	36 mos to 6 yrs	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 51.06
	HOME	0-24 months	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 62.61
	HOME	24 months to 6 years	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 54.82
Denver	CENTER	0-18 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 63.88
	CENTER	18-36 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 55.31
	CENTER	36 months to 6 years	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 45.41
	HOME	0-24 months	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 55.89
	HOME	24 months to 6 years	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 53.74
Summit	CENTER	0-18 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 69.01
	CENTER	18-36 months	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 66.08
	CENTER	36 months to 6 years	Tier 1 & Tier 2	\$ 56.85
	HOME	0-24 months	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 58.28
	HOME	24 months to 6 years	Tier 4 & Tier 5	\$ 56.44



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Brad Busse
Dan Ritchie

Colorado Senate
Senate Education Committee
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax Avenue, Room 346
Denver, CO 80203

March 30, 2022

Re: Hearing Item: House Bill 22-1295 (Department Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program, Sirota, Garnett, Buckner and Fenberg)

Dear Senate Education Committee,

On behalf of the 55 EPIC members consisting of Colorado business executives and organizational leaders, EPIC is urging your support of HB22-1295 to fully implement a new department of early childhood and universal preschool, which will provide the greatest opportunity to put Colorado's children and families first. After many conversations with business leaders and early childhood stakeholders over the past year, we believe this legislation will effectively meet the [business community priorities](#) for the design and implementation of universal preschool and an effective early childhood system in Colorado.

Complicated processes for families and early education providers, inefficiencies across funding streams, and fragmentation of regulatory standards have been longstanding problems in Colorado's current early childhood programs. Thanks to the bold vision of many parents, community members, and advocates, this bill is designed to bring the pieces of our early childhood system together, to operate effectively and efficiently, and provide the best service to children and families.

As the business voice in support of early childhood investments in Colorado, EPIC emphasizes early childhood is not only an important education issue, but also affects Colorado's economy. Business leaders have taken note of the increased need for access to affordable and quality early childhood care and education for the workforce, and HB22-1295 will establish state and community partnerships for a mixed delivery model of child care and early childhood programs through school and community-based providers. This will honor parent choice and ensure access to preschool for all families of Colorado within an effective and efficient system.

EPIC is proud to have our Board member and Executive member, Adeeb Khan, Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility & Executive Director of the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation, testifying on our and the business community's behalf during the committee hearing. We ask for your support of this bill and stand ready to provide any additional information that would be helpful to the members of the Senate Education Committee.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nicole Riehl", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Nicole Riehl
President and CEO
Executives Partnering to Invest in Children

Cc: Senate Education Committee Members



Member of the General Assembly
Colorado General Assembly
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Re: HB 22-1295

Dear Member of the General Assembly:

We write to you today to strongly urge your **YES vote on House Bill 22-1295**, concerning the Colorado Department of Early Childhood and the Universal Preschool Program.

We are members of ReadyNation, a nonprofit, bipartisan network of more than 2,600 business leaders from Colorado and across the country who are committed to boosting research-proven efforts to strengthen the quality of our workforce and economy. We know the value and importance of investing in early education to strengthen our economy, and we believe this legislation provides an historic opportunity for Colorado to make transformative change of our early childhood system.

ReadyNation supports efforts to increase children's access to high-quality early care and education programs because they help ensure that children are prepared for academic and life success. Scientific research has shown that brain development from birth to age five sets the foundation for a child's life. Additionally, when young children can access reliable, quality early education programs, parents and caregivers are better able to engage in the workforce and contribute to our state's economic success today. These investments make a two-generation impact that strengthens Colorado's economy today and in the future.

House Bill 22-1295 establishes dedicated infrastructure to ensure strong early childhood services across the state and puts in place a universal preschool program to ensure all Colorado kids can access 10 hours per week of quality preschool in the year before kindergarten. Specific elements of this legislation that we support include:

- **Mixed Delivery & Parent Choice:** We believe strongly that a mixed delivery system is built around family choice. As such, we appreciated the specific requirements that each community's plan should be built to ensure all licensed providers – traditional schools, charter schools, center and in-home community-based preschools – are able to participate in the program.

- **Preschool Specific Rate Setting Authority to Sit in Department of Early Childhood:** It is appropriate that the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood be empowered to annually establish a preschool-specific reimbursement rate. Doing so will ensure equitable and consistent policy is applied statewide, that preschool-specific considerations are made when the rates are set and that we can maximize the dedicated funding approved by voters in 2020.
- **Program Alignment & Efficient Administration:** One key element of efficient alignment of the State is the single state application called for in this legislation. It allows the State to take responsibility for combining and coordinating early care and education programs and funding sources to maximize available dollars to support children and families, while minimizing administrative burden, will be critical in ensuring program efficiency and maximizing family participation.
- **Data Informed Decision Making & Commitment to Continuous Improvement:** We are strongly supportive of the commitment to data collection and data-informed decision making reflected in the legislation. Further, we appreciate the commitment to using independent evaluators to assess program quality and inform on-going program improvement. The commitment to public transparency of the data collected and regarding results of evaluations is essential.

Thank you for your service to Colorado and your consideration of our request for your YES vote on House Bill 22-1295.

Respectfully,

Cody Belzley
President & CEO
Common Good
Consulting

Kevin Hougen
President & CEO
Aurora Chamber of
Commerce

Kim Haarberg
Owner
ARS Companies

Noreen Landis-Tyson
President & CEO
Community Partnership
for Child Development

Diane Price
CEO
Early Connections
Learning Centers

Douglas Price
Chairman & CEO
CSBO Holdings, Inc.

Amy Sherman
President & CEO
NW Douglas County
Chamber & Economic
Development Corp.

Burnie Zercher
President/Owner
Industrial Constructors/
Managers Inc.



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
DENVER

Statement in Support of HB22-1295

March 31, 2022

Mr. Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Lindsay Johnson, and I am the Junior League of Denver Public Policy Vice President. On behalf of our membership, I urge you to support HB22-1295 Department Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program.

Junior League of Denver is a women's training organization that develops civic leaders committed to improving our community. On the Public Policy Council, we have a proud history of advocacy dating back to 1987, when we were the first Junior League in the United States to partner with a government affairs specialist. Since then, the Public Policy Council has worked closely with our specialists to monitor, advocate, and support various important pieces of legislation at the Colorado State Capitol including bills that address early childhood education, women and children's health, women's self-sufficiency issues, food insecurity, and housing. Specifically, over the past few years, we have fully supported and advocated for the passage of both HB19-1262 State Funding For Full-day Kindergarten and HB21-1304 Early Childhood System.

Across all of our advocacy efforts, our work centers on disrupting the cycle of systemic poverty for women and families in Denver – so HB22-1295 hits close to home. For us, this bill is about giving every child access to high-quality early childhood experiences so that they can build a foundation to thrive in society. It's about giving every parent or caregiver relief from the heavy financial burden of preschool. It's about breaking down barriers to access, regardless of race, ethnicity, or household income. HB22-1295 addresses all of these issues in a tangible way. Moreover, this is common-sense legislation. By integrating all of Colorado's early childhood programs under one department, HB22-1295 sets up effective governance and provides a seamless experience for families to access early childhood programs and support.

Early childhood is a critical time in a child's life – a determinative moment where the foundation for a child's future is laid. Colorado's recent expansion of full-day kindergarten was a huge step forward in ensuring equal opportunity for all children; the passing of HB22-1295 is the next necessary step. I urge you to take action and support this bill.

Thank you for your leadership,

Lindsay M. Johnson
Public Policy Council Vice President
Junior League of Denver



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Thank you for your leadership,

Lindsay M. Johnson
Public Policy Council Vice President
Junior League of Denver



**HEALTHIER™
COLORADO**

March 31, 2022

Dear Chair Bridges, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Stuart Jenkins and I am the policy manager with Healthier Colorado, which is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that seeks to provide every Coloradan the opportunity to live a healthier life through policy-oriented solutions. I'm writing in support of HB22-1295 establishing the Department of Early Childhood and creating the Colorado universal preschool program.

The key to living a healthy life is getting off on the right foot. Starting young is the key. Young children across Colorado will benefit from early access to quality education that positively impacts their futures by giving them the opportunity to lead a healthy, prosperous life.

Decades of research tell us that access to quality early childhood education, particularly for kids from lower income communities or with other risk factors, is one of the single best predictors of school success. Kids who have access to preschool are less likely to have a significant reading deficiency in kindergarten, half as likely to be held back by third grade, and more likely to graduate on time. Therefore, access to high quality early childhood experiences are critical in providing kids with the foundation they need to thrive.

HB22-1295 advances the recommendations unanimously approved by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission to strengthen Colorado's early childhood infrastructure, increase access to early education services, and better support our early childhood workforce. With the passage of this bill, families will have an authentic voice in the direction of our early childhood education system. Kids will have universal and equitable access to a range of high-quality local preschool options. Communities will have more options of early education providers through a mixed-delivery system.

Above all, this bill will provide a seamless experience for children and families in our early childhood system and ensure access to high-quality childcare and preschool in every community across our state.

Healthier Colorado was proud to support the passage of Proposition EE along with more than 150 organizations and elected officials to help fund the Colorado universal preschool program. HB22-1295 fulfills the will of Colorado voters by creating and investing in the early childhood infrastructure to create better beginnings for all Colorado children. Thank you for your time and we urge your support for this critical bill to put Colorado on a path to be the best state for our kids and families.

Stuart Jenkins, Policy Manager
Healthier Colorado
