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The purpose of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is to help promote school readiness for children who are least likely to be ready to learn [see 22-28-102, the legislative declaration].

ECARE (Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement) was added under the Colorado Preschool Program to allow CPP positions (referred to as "slots") to be used more flexibly. CPP allows only 5% of slots to be used for full-day kindergarten. ECARE has no restriction on how many slots can be used for full-day kindergarten.

The reason for HB 1134 is as follows: When ECARE was enacted in 2013, there was an assumption by legislators that students funded for kindergarten under ECARE would have to meet the same at-risk eligibility requirements as the preschool students. When an inquiry was made to Legislative Legal Services about this, their interpretation was that the eligibility requirements do not apply for kindergarten students. CDE says that its practice is to require ECARE slots to be used for at-risk students only, but the Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission would like to codify it so that when CDE staff changes over time, there will be certainty that the practice will continue.

With limited resources available under ECARE and limited resources available for full-day kindergarten, it is important to honor the intent of ECARE and use these valuable resources for the students who are least likely to be ready for school.