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Colorado Senate
Senate Finance Committee
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax Avenue, SCR 357
Denver, CO 80203

Hearing Date: May 2, 2023

RE: House Bill 23-1290, Proposition EE Funding Retention Rate Reduction

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

On behalf of EPIC's members, who are nearly 70 business executives from a range of industries and communities across Colorado, I respectfully request your support for HB 23-1290. EPIC supported Proposition EE in 2020, and we supported the creation of Universal Pre-K in Colorado because we know that access to preschool is critical to the success of our youngest Coloradan, and ultimately, our workforce and economy.

Proposition EE was referred to the votes with bipartisan support and it was overwhelmingly supported by voters across Colorado. The voters clearly told the state that they want to see an effective, publicly funded Universal Pre-K program. HB 23-1290 is a technical bill – asking voters to confirm that they want the state to spend all the money raised by Proposition EE to support Universal Pre-K rather than sending it back to tobacco wholesalers and retailers.

More than 30,000 families have already signed up for UPK in its first year, and retaining this money will allow Colorado to fully serve more children, especially those who are most in need because they live in households with very low incomes, are English learners, or have special education needs.

As the business voice in support of early childhood in Colorado, EPIC believes that investments in our early childhood care and education system are critical to a strong economy and competitive business environment. This is why we are asking for you to support preschool for all children in Colorado with a yes vote on HB 23-1290.

We are available to provide any information that would be helpful to you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Riehl", written in a cursive style.

Nicole Riehl
President and CEO
Executives Partnering to Invest in Children



1705 17th Street
Suite 200
Denver, CO 80202

P 303.454.3757
E info@garycommunity.org
W garycommunity.org

May 1, 2023

Support HB 23-1290

Submitted to the Colorado Senate Finance Committee
Steffanie Clothier, Director, School Readiness, Gary Ventures

Gary Ventures is excited to support HB23-1290 to refer a measure to the ballot to retain tobacco and nicotine funding and tax rates that support universal preschool.

Gary Ventures has been actively involved in supporting early care and efforts in Colorado for decades. In 2020, Gary supported the proposal to refer Proposition EE to the ballot through HB 20-1427 followed by legislation to establish the transition process (HB21-1304) and the creation of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) (HB22-1295).

HB 23-1290 is needed to retain the revenue that has come in over projection. The calculations for the 2020 Blue Book were made based on the best information available but more revenue has come in than expected. Coloradans voted unequivocally to fund universal preschool and the revenue that is over the initial estimate is very much needed to support Colorado's expansion of preschool. Those funds and the tax rate should remain with preschool rather than be refunded to cigarette, tobacco and nicotine product wholesalers and distributors and other taxpayers. TABOR requires voters to make this decision.

Following the 2020 voter approval of the measure, thousands of stakeholders have been engaged in the design of the new Department of Early Childhood and the features of the Colorado Universal Preschool Program. We are committed to success and are working alongside the new team at the Department to bring that vision to life.

What we also know is that Colorado needs to adequately fund preschool in order to ensure it meets the needs of families and fairly pays providers for the cost of operating preschool classrooms. Addressing the historic underfunding of early care and education programs and supporting providers coming out of the COVID pandemic has meant establishing higher rates than the previous Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and offering both part day hours and school day hours for families that qualify which allows working families to take advantage of the offering. Given these realities, retaining the added revenue is critical.

Legislators have been critical to this work all along the way and we look forward to your support of HB23-1290.



Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Jillian Fabricius, and I am Deputy Director with Illuminate Colorado, a statewide nonprofit working to strengthen families, organizations, and communities to prevent child maltreatment. I am submitting written testimony **to ask you for a yes vote on HB23-1290 Proposition EE Funding Retention Rate Reduction.**

When we enable voters to retain funding for high quality early childhood education, we strengthen the foundation for families and communities to thrive.

Illuminate supports HB23-1290 for two main reasons:

1. **HB23-1290 would enable voters to decide to retain funding for the preschool programs fund, which promotes protective factors for child maltreatment.** Research has shown that building concrete supports in times of need, a protective factor, has the power to prevent and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.¹ When families have access to high quality childcare, it reduces chronic stress and other mental health concerns, preventing child maltreatment. States that meet childcare needs and have quality licensed childcare settings that meet the childcare demand have decreased rates of child abuse and neglect.² This bill would enable voters to make informed decisions about whether to retain excess funds for early childhood education and fund this evidence-based protective factor to prevent child maltreatment.
2. **HB23-1290 would enable voters to decide to retain funding for the preschool programs fund, which enhances economic security for families.** When families have the opportunity to participate in high quality early childhood education and childcare, parents have increased opportunities to participate in the workforce. Parent workforce participation enhances economic security, reducing chronic stress and enabling parents to meet their children's needs.³ This bill would give voters the opportunity to decide to retain funds that would promote parent workforce participation and enhance economic security.

In closing, when we enable voters to retain funds and further support early childhood education, we strengthen the foundations of families and communities to thrive. **We urge you to support referring a ballot issue for Proposition EE funds retention by voting 'yes' on HB23-1290.**

Sincerely,

Jillian Adams Fabricius, Deputy Director

jfabricius@illuminatecolorado.org

¹ Center for the Study of Social Policy. (n.d.) About Strengthening Families and the protective factors framework. Retrieved From: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/protective-factors-framework/>

² National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2016). Preventing child abuse and neglect: A technical package for policy, norm, and programmatic activities. Retrieved From: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/CAN-Prevention-Technical-Package.pdf>

³ National Conference of State Legislatures. (2023). Policy levers for preventing child maltreatment. Retrieved From: <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/policy-levers-for-preventing-child-maltreatment>