



September 25, 2009

The official start of fall signifies a fresh start for many Coloradans, including kids who are going back to school. To the Colorado Children's Campaign, the arrival of fall means that Colorado's 2010 legislative session is around the corner!

NEW TEAM MEMBERS AT THE CCC

The Children's Campaign is excited to announce two new additions to its policy team.

- Cody Belzley will join the CCC team as Vice President of Public Affairs, providing strategic policy and communications expertise and management. Cody most recently served as the Senior Policy Analyst for Health in the Office of Policy and Initiatives for Governor Ritter. Prior to this position, she worked on state and federal policy for Denver Health, Colorado's largest safety net health system, and as a political and policy communications consultant for SE2, a communications firm. Cody has worked with the Children's Campaign on issues including the successful 2006 Preschool Matters Denver ballot initiative and the 2004 statewide tobacco initiative that is generating more than \$170 million annually for health programs, including the Child Health Plan Plus.
- In addition, the Children's Campaign is excited to announce that Reilly Pharo has joined the policy team as Director of Government Affairs and lobbyist. Reilly worked for the Children's Campaign last legislative session and also has experience working in grassroots advocacy and for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado.

STATE BUDGET UPDATE

Colorado Legislative Council staff presented the state's September Revenue Forecast to the Joint Budget Committee last week. The FY 2009-2010 forecast shows a revenue shortfall that is \$240.7 million worse than the June forecast (which showed a \$320 million shortfall), bringing the current total FY 2009-2010 revenue shortfall to \$560.7 million. Legislative Council also forecasts that the FY 2010-2011 revenue shortfall will be \$748.4 million. The revenue numbers actually understate the budget impacts since revenue does not account for budget factors like rising caseloads, inflation, or constitutional requirements.

HEALTH POLICY UPDATES

Health Reform Continues to Dominate the Debate

Health reform continues to be a major topic of discussion at the federal level. All proposals include an increase in the financial eligibility criteria for Medicaid to allow the program to reach more kids, parents and adults. Other basic elements addressed include health insurance exchanges, entities that would help consumers navigate and choose the right insurance products for their needs; the definition of benefit packages, which eliminate or minimize cost-sharing for preventive health care for kids and adults; and protections for consumers against unfair treatment by insurance companies, including exclusions for existing conditions. The Colorado Children's Campaign will continue to actively monitor federal health reform proposals for their impact on Colorado kids and work with our federal and state representatives to ensure the best outcomes for Colorado's most vulnerable kids.

If you are interested in receiving Action Alerts with specific and timely actions for how you can impact federal health reform and other health initiatives in Colorado, please visit:

http://www.coloradokids.org/act_now/email_updates.html?PHPSESSID=5c2c36c5b017f922fec96e433ad341e4 and click on "Child Health Updates."

Grant to Help Eliminate Barriers to Health Care for Colorado Families

The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, the state department with authority over CHP+ and Medicaid, recently announced it received a \$42 million grant to help it implement its eligibility modernization initiative, which will include the creation of an online benefits application, a help center for clients, and support for community-based organizations that provide assistance to CHP+ and Medicaid applicants. This initiative will streamline the eligibility determination, enrollment, and re-enrollment process to eliminate barriers for families seeking assistance.

K-12 POLICY UPDATES

Interim School Finance Committee Proposals

This Thursday, members of the Interim School Finance Committee will vote on their recommendations for 2010 legislation, based on concepts they proposed at their recent meeting. The committee has met during the summer to decide if any changes need to be made to the way Colorado funds its public schools. Conceptual proposals expected to be voted on include:

- Increasing transparency of school districts;
- Creating school improvement zones to target funds to low-performing schools;
- Linking at-risk dollars to early elementary school students who were eligible for the Colorado Preschool Program;

- Directing at-risk funds more precisely to the schools where students are enrolled; and
- Providing incentives for coordination of administrative functions across small school districts.

The committee has also discussed including academic factors in funding at-risk students and examining different ways to count students when funding school districts, although members do not appear to have consensus on supporting these latter concepts at this time. To learn more about the work of the Interim School Finance Committee, see the following web page:

<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1244045240660&pagename=CGA-LegislativeCouncil%2FCLCLayout>

Time for Your Decisions about Local School Board Members

It's the season for local school board elections in Colorado's 178 school districts. The election will be held on November 3, 2009, and candidates were verified for the ballot a few weeks ago. School boards make critical decisions about the education of children in preschool through 12th grade, including hiring and supervising the superintendent; determining curriculum, instruction, school buildings, budget priorities, teacher contracts; and establishing a wide range of policies ranging from graduation requirements to student discipline. Members are running for four-year terms (or two-year terms in case of vacancies) and serve on boards of either five or seven members. In some school districts, candidates are participating in forums to educate the community about their views on public education issues. You can call your local school district to find out about any forums. For contact information, the following link lists local school districts websites:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/scripts/districtprofiles/k12schlwebsites.asp>

EARLY CHILDHOOD UPDATES

Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission Looks for Opportunities to Improve Lives of Young Children in Colorado

The Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission, as established by HB-09 1343, is off and running! The Commission has met three times this summer and will meet another three times before mid-November. The purpose is to examine issues in early childhood in Colorado and make legislative changes for improvement. Thus far, the Commission has heard from a variety of stakeholders, state agencies and experts on what efforts would benefit our youngest citizens.

The Commission has particular interest in supporting quality, protecting vital programs like the Colorado Preschool Program, improving the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, raising the standards for professional development of early education providers, and supporting working families in finding stable, quality child care. Our next meeting is October 2nd, at 9 a.m. in HCR 0112 at the State Capitol. Please join us if you can. Agendas, meeting minutes, and other information can always be found at

http://www.coloradokids.org/our_issues/early_childhood/early_childhood_caucus.html . Stay tuned in the next few weeks as the commission develops legislation for the upcoming session. Please feel free to contact our early childhood initiatives director, Jon-Paul Bianchi, with any questions or concerns at jonpaul@coloradokids.org.

OTHER CCC UPDATES

Don't Miss Out! 2nd Annual ABC at the Bear Event to Benefit the Colorado Children's Campaign

Join us at an Evergreen landmark, The Little Bear, for the 2nd Annual not-to-be-missed night of music, food, and fun to raise funds to support our work to improve the lives of our state's more than 1.2 million children.

Date: Thursday, October 1, 2009

Doors Open: 6:30 p.m.

Location: The Little Bear, Evergreen, Colorado

Tickets: \$50 each, includes dinner, drinks, and music by Colorado's own Something Underground
(Must be age 21 & over to attend)

To purchase your tickets now, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/ybtn8xo>

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