



Support ECSRLC Bill #1: Supports for Early Childhood Educator Workforce

What is the problem?

According to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, demand for early childhood educators and directors is expected to increase by nearly 20% over the next 10 years.ⁱ That is faster anticipated growth than for K-12 educators. Despite anticipated growing demand, Colorado is already facing a shortage of qualified early childhood educators. In a statewide analysis of the early care and education sector, more than 70% of child care center directors report a top challenge to be finding qualified staff, with an average of 2.5 months to fill open positions in positions.ⁱⁱ

The current early childhood educator shortage has significant implications for children and families:

- Colorado only has licensed early care and education capacity for roughly 60% of the 247,000 children under 6 years old with all parents in the workforce. Providers identify the lack of qualified teachers as the most influential factor in limiting capacity.ⁱⁱⁱ
- More than 12% of Colorado children under 6 (nearly 30,000 kids) had a parent who report that they or another family member has had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job because of problems with child care.^{iv}
- With the unemployment rate as low as 2 percent in some communities, finding candidates to fill open positions is already a challenge. If child care supply can't meet demand in Colorado's growing economy, employers will struggle even more to attract and retain a qualified workforce.

The challenges of child care access, affordability, and quality can only be addressed by better supporting the early care and education workforce. And, without significant changes, we will see these challenges worsen in the years ahead as demand for qualified educators continues to increase.

What does the bill do?

The bill has three major provisions: (1) Streamlining the qualification pathways to the classroom for aspiring early childhood educators, (2) Establishing a scholarship and grant program to recruit and retain early childhood educators, and (3) Establishing an apprenticeship program for early childhood educators.

- 1) Streamlined qualification pathways for aspiring educators
 - a. Allows programs to be licensed while aspiring educators are pursuing their credential
 - b. Recognizes in the credentialing system for prior experience and demonstrated competency
 - c. Requires CDHS and CDE to align child care licensing, educator credentialing, and teacher licensing systems as well as streamlining paperwork burdens and requirements
 - d. Requires, every two years, a gap analysis, by age group and geography, of current and needed EC educators
 - e. Supports for local communities to increase concurrent enrollment, career pathways, and CTE access for aspiring educators.
 - f. Requires an expedited review of preservice requirements and background checks (*Note: may be amended out of the bill due to technology costs associated with this provision)
 - g. Supports identification of already- or nearly-qualified members of the workforce in connecting with open positions (*Note: may be amended out of the bill due to technology costs associated with this provision)



- 2) Early Care and Education Recruitment and Retention Grant and Scholarship Program
 - a. Creates a program to increase number of qualified educators and retain those currently working in the field.
 - b. Allows a diversity of entities from individuals, non-profits, licensed early care and education programs, and institutions of higher education to apply for funding so investments can be responsive to diverse needs around the state.
 - c. Allows expenditures for higher education costs, advancing credentials, training for mentorship, coaching, and other certification, covering providers' costs for release time and substitutes, funding for "grow-your-own" programs, and other financial incentives to support retention.
 - d. Reporting on outcomes achieved by grant recipients
- 3) Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship Program
 - a. Creates work-based learning opportunities to promote on-the-job training, classroom instruction, and financial rewards for skill gains, credentials, and degrees.
 - b. Supports a diversity of local entities in expanding existing or implementing new apprenticeship programs
 - c. Ensures collaboration between CDLE, CDE, and CDHS for the program

How will it help address the problem?

By supporting streamlined pathways to the classroom and the retention of qualified early educators, we can help support children's development, families' economic security, and our state's economy.

- **Children.** Quality early experiences lay the foundation for a lifetime of success. A child's brain undergoes a remarkable period of growth from birth to three years—producing more than 1 million new neural connections every second. This brain development is influenced by a child's relationships, experiences and environment.
- **Families.** Most Colorado parents with young children have all parents in the workforce, making early care and education a reality in today's economy. Access to quality early care and education is severely limited by the limited supply of qualified early educators.
- **Colorado's Economy.** Early care and education has tremendous spillover benefits for Colorado's economic development: for each new child care job created in our state, more than 1.5 additional jobs are created in the larger state economy.^v

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ⁱ <https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/analyzer/results.aspx?session=occproj>

ⁱⁱ https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Key_Findings_CO_EC_Workforce_Survey.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.coloradokids.org/data/kids-count-archive/2019-kids-count/>

^{iv} <https://www.coloradokids.org/data/kids-count-archive/2019-kids-count/>

^v <https://www.ced.org/pdf/Report%20-%20Child%20Care%20in%20State%20Economies.pdf>