

**Colorado Children's Campaign Testimony in Support of
HB 20B-1002: Emergency Relief Programs For the Child Care Sector**
Reps. Kipp & Landgraf, McCluskie / Sens. Pettersen & Sonnenberg, Priola

Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 20B-1002 to better support the child care sector. My name is Bill Jaeger and I am the Vice President of Early Childhood and Policy Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign. Thank you to the sponsors, Rep. Kipp and Rep. Landgraf, for leading the effort to support this vital segment of our small business sector and the working families that our early educators support.

During the pandemic, we all have relied on essential workers – nurses, doctors, health care professionals, agricultural producers, sanitation workers, grocery store employees, and many others – during our COVID response. These professionals have done heroic work. *Their* heroic work, however, has been made possible by the early care and education professionals who have stepped up to care for and educate young children so their parents can work.

And just as our emergency response has been made possible by child care and early education providers, so will our economic recovery. In short, parents need child care so that they can work. Prior to the pandemic, nearly two-thirds of children under the age of six had all of their parents in the workforce. For these parents to be able to return to work, they need to know that their children are in safe, healthy, stimulating environments. Without child care, our economy can't recover.

Sadly, the lack of available child care, and the potential that we will lose even more providers, is impacting our economic recovery. In a U.S. Chamber of Commerce analysis from this month, when asked what factors contributed to their employees leaving the workforce, 50 percent of employers cited child care concerns and more than three-quarters of health care employers point to child care concerns as a contributing factor. And this has disproportionately impacted women's labor force participation. As of October, more than 2 million women have dropped out of the workforce, many for good. The number of women working has fallen to the lowest level since 1988. Three times as many women as men between 25 and 44 say they are not working due to child-care issues.ⁱ

This bill would build on two successful grant programs at the Office of Early Childhood at CDHS that have been supported with federal CARES Act and Preschool Development Grant funds and would help address this issue.

- 1) Sustainability grants were a lifeline for providers when we received CARES Act funding earlier this year. Unfortunately, those dollars were inadequate to the need which has only grown as the disruptions to small business and nonprofit child care have continued. The bill builds on the success of this federally-funded effort with one-time state money by creating a simple process for providers to access much needed funds to overcome the increased staffing, cleaning, supply, and other COVID-related costs at a time when revenues from private pay sources and public funding streams tied to attendance have declined. We lacked adequate child care supply prior to the pandemic and if we lose more of these providers, our economic recovery will be hindered.
- 2) Expansion grants have helped build the pipeline of providers in Colorado and additional support can set the stage for building the sector back better. Having lost 10% of our providers and knowing that at least one-quarter are contemplating closure, we must both support our existing providers and find ways to rebuild some of what we have lost. These grants will be targeted to communities that have been historically under-supported with access to child care and support

the array of approaches, from family child care to center-based care, that can respond to locally variable circumstances.

Our economic recovery will be shaped by how quickly our labor force can return to work. And our children's educational recovery will hinge on quality early and enriching experiences. Child care and early education is essential to both, particularly for women and families of color, and we ask that you support this bill to support this vital sector that we all rely on.

ⁱ <https://www.thecut.com/2020/11/covid-19-pandemic-kids-mental-health.html>