The Colorado Children's Campaign serves as the leading voice for kids at the state Capitol and in communities across the state. In our over 35-year history, we've worked with policymakers from every corner of the state and every political perspective to improve the well-being of Colorado kids. Children's issues aren't partisan, and we've proven that we can develop innovative solutions when we work together.

In the 2021 legislative session, legislators and advocates worked to advance policy solutions to respond to the pandemic and restructure systems to benefit all Coloradans. In fact, most of the funding that was cut from our state budget last year has been restored, and many of our priority bills have passed with bipartisan support. In the midst of these successes, we continue to recognize the work that still remains in realizing every chance for every child in Colorado. Below are some of the bills we championed and supported in the 2021 legislative session:

**Prioritizing Child and Maternal Health**

- **Numerous Family Planning Expansions:** SB21-025 (Pettersen & Coram/Tipper & Will) expands coverage for family planning services to people who lack coverage and are just above the Medicaid income eligibility threshold. SB21-009 (Jacquez Lewis/Caraveo) expands Medicaid to provide contraceptives for undocumented communities in Colorado and requires access to a 12-month supply of contraceptives for all who use Medicaid. SB21-016 (Pettersen & Moreno/ Esgar & Mullica) ensures cost-sharing free STI testing and prevention and fills family planning coverage gaps.

- **Direct Entry Midwives Sunset Extension:** SB21-101 (Story & Fields/Caraveo & Williams) better integrates the maternity care system by allowing Certified Professional Midwives to practice at birth centers, providing pregnant people with additional choices of birth settings and providers.

- **Maternal Health System Improvements:** SB21-194 (Buckner/Herod) improves stakeholder engagement in the state’s maternal mortality review process and requires CDPHE (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment) to improve the public reporting of maternal health data. It also extends Medicaid and CHIP coverage to 12-months postpartum (coverage currently ends 2-3 months after birth), allowing individuals to receive a comprehensive set of services in the year following pregnancy.

- **Behavioral Health Restoration Act:** SB21-137 (Pettersen & Winter/Michaelson-Jenet & Kennedy) makes investments in perinatal depression screens in Medicaid, early childhood mental health consultants, and school-based mental health professionals.

- **Colorado Option:** HB21-1232 (Roberts & Jodeh/Donovan) establishes a standardized health plan in Colorado that must reduce health disparities and offer improved coverage of primary, behavioral, and perinatal health services. It requires the plan to reduce premiums and directs federal savings due to those reduced premiums into the Health Insurance Affordability Enterprise to allow additional coverage expansions for people left out of health reform.

- **Improved Firearm Safety:** HB21-1106 (Duran & Mullica/Bridges & Hansen) creates a firearm “safe storage” law, which research has proven to be an effective way to reduce gun-related injuries and deaths among children, including suicides. HB21-1299 (Sullivan & Bacon/Fields & Hansen) creates a new Office of Gun Violence Prevention to further examine gun violence in the state, including identifying communities that are most affected and using evidence-based tools to prevent gun violence.

**Addressing Inequities in Public Education Funding and Making Wise Investments**

- **Equity for Public School Students & Taxpayers:** HB21-1164 & SJR21-006 (Esgar & Garnett/Zenzinger & Fenberg) correct a long-standing error in the state's property tax system for funding public education, equalizing tax rates and allowing for hundreds of millions of additional dollars to be allocated to Colorado’s students over time.

- **Equitable Public School Finance Act:** SB21-268 (Zenzinger & Lundeen/McLachlan & McCluskie) makes historic investments in students by expanding the “at-risk” formula factor to include students eligible for reduced-price lunches (not just those eligible for free lunch), and creating a new weighted factor for English Language Learners. It also restores funding to essential grant programs that were cut in response to the pandemic.

- **Targeted Funding Formula Changes:** HB21-1325 (McCluskie & Herod/Zenzinger & Lundeen) creates a Legislative Interim Committee on School Finance that must address specific issues to improve and make more student-centric the state’s allocation of education funding.
Elevating Early Childhood in Colorado

New State Department of Early Childhood & Pre-K Implementation: HB21-1304 (Sirotta & Garnett/Fenberg & Buckner) consolidates various early childhood programs currently scattered across state agencies into the Colorado Department of Early Childhood. The bill initiates a community-informed process to unify early childhood services in the new department and requires a plan to implement voluntary universal preschool statewide in alignment with voter intent in Prop EE.

Streamlined Family Child Care Regulations: HB21-1222 (A. Valdez & Van Winkle/Winter & Smallwood) increases access to child care by reducing burdensome regulations that family child care homes face by requiring local regulatory entities to treat licensed family child care providers as residences for regulatory purposes like zoning, fire, and building codes.

Early Childhood Stimulus & Workforce Supports: SB21-236 (Story & Sonnenberg/Tipper & Van Beber) supports the early care and education workforce, as well as innovation in the early care and education sector, by creating and expanding several grant programs aimed at increasing child care capacity throughout the state.

Helping Families Pursue Economic Opportunity and Stay Housed

Removing Barriers to Opportunities: SB21-199 (Jaquez-Lewis & Winter/Gonzales-Gutierrez & Esgar) will open opportunities for individuals without proper documentation to apply for occupational and commercial licenses, grants, contracts and loans, and have access to basic public support services at the state and local level.

Supporting Safe, Stable Housing: Multiple bills, including SB21-173 (Gonzales & Moreno/Gonzales-Gutierrez & Caraveo), HB21-1117 (Gonzales-Gutierrez & Lontine/Gonzales & Rodriguez) and HB21-1329 (Woodrow & Gonzales-Gutierrez/Holbert & Gonzales), will support the housing needs of families by increasing fairness and representation in the eviction court process, reasonably limiting late fees, and allowing communities to create affordable housing so that all Colorado kids and families can stay in their homes.

Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit & Funding the Child Tax Credit: HB21-1311 (Sirotta & Weissman/Hansen & Moreno) increases and expands the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and funds the state Child Tax Credit (CTC)--two of the most effective tools for eliminating child poverty.

Providing Diapering Essentials: SB21-027 (Pettersen & Danielson/Gonzales-Gutierrez & Tipper) creates a grant program to provide millions in funding to purchase and provide diapering essentials to low-income families.

Defending Progress for Children and Families

Restoring Budget Priorities: The Long Bill, SB21-205 (Moreno/McCluskie), restored funding to numerous programs and services that had to be reduced or eliminated in last year’s budget due to the pandemic. This year’s budget reversed most of the prior year’s funding cuts and renewed investments in family planning services, comprehensive sex education, public education, workforce programs, and income support.

Maintaining Student Assessments: HB21-1161 (Sirotta & McLachlan/Zenzinger & Coram), after extensive negotiations, required summative assessments for certain grades and subjects in the Spring 2020-21 school year. Comparable assessments represent one important tool for measuring student performance and growth, and results will provide data points to inform the design of student supports and interventions coming out of the pandemic.

Ensuring Safe Child Care Regulations: SB21-167 (Holbert & Bridges/Larson & Gray) would have greatly loosened safety standards on all forms of child care throughout the state. This bill was amended to strike the right balance between eliminating duplicative regulations and protecting the health and safety of young children.

GET THE FACTS!

Looking for data on Colorado kids and families? Visit the KIDS COUNT Data Center for the most up-to-date sources of information on demographics, outcomes and more. Visit datacenter.kidscount.org/CO

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Visit our Capitol Update Center to learn more about past and future policy efforts. www.coloradokids.org/action