

# LEGISLATIVE IMPACTS 2024



As 2024 began, Colorado families were struggling with the rising cost of living, which made it harder for many to afford essentials like child care, housing, and medical care. Young people were facing challenges resulting from years of inadequate and inequitable investment in public schools. Legislators were navigating complicated political dynamics and a tight budget as federal pandemic relief funding began to run out.

During the 2024 legislative session, the Colorado Children's Campaign team focused on advancing policy changes to provide opportunities for children and help families thrive as our state and communities evolve.

We are pleased to report that the legislature took bold steps this year to support children's well-being. These include updating our state's approach to funding public schools for the first time in 30 years and passing policies that will do more to reduce child poverty than any state effort in recent memory.

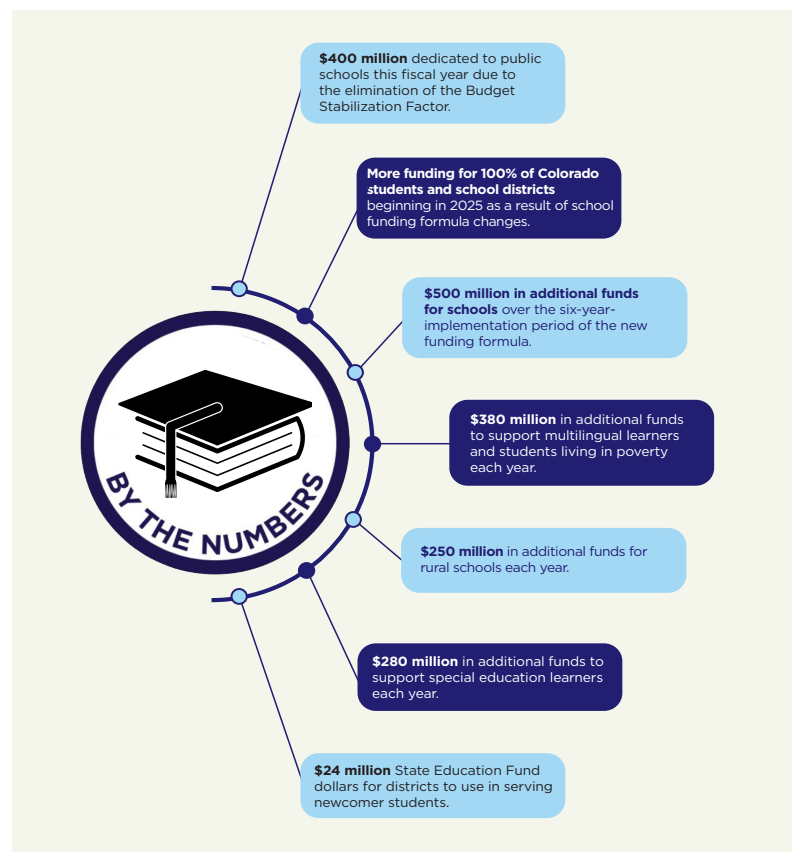


Some of the most important efforts the Colorado Children's Campaign supported in 2024 include:

## Historic Investments in K-12 Education

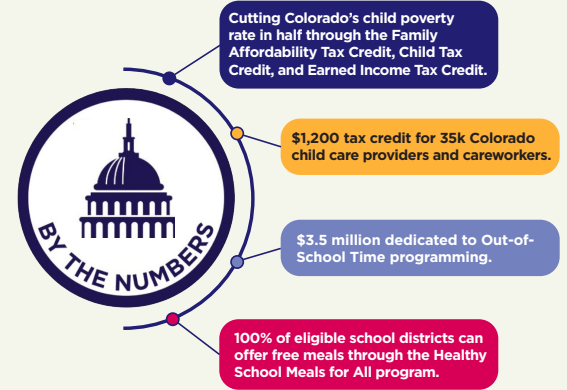
**A fair school finance formula and more funding for education:** Since 1994, Colorado has used a school finance formula that sends more funding per student to school districts in some of the state's wealthiest areas. **HB24-1448** creates a new formula that will instead send more state funds to students living in poverty, students learning English, and students who have special needs. Also in 2024, the Joint Budget Committee fully funded public schools for the first time in a decade. These two decisions made the 2024 legislative session a historic year for investment in public education.

**Money for out-of-school programs:** **HB24-1331** creates a grant program for organizations to provide academic enrichment and other services when school is not in session, such as before or after school or during the summer break. The grant program will serve about 15,000 young people each year. It is the state's first permanent investment in out-of-school programs and will support programs that would likely have shut down as pandemic-era funding ran out.



# Groundbreaking Steps to Support Family Economic Prosperity

**Cutting Colorado's child poverty rate in half:** The Family Affordability Tax Credit created through **HB24-1311** will put more money into the hands of families and help cut the child poverty rate in Colorado in half. This refundable tax credit for families with children prioritizes low-income families with young children. When combined with the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, it has the potential to make Colorado's child poverty rate the lowest in the country.



**A tax credit for careworkers:** Careworkers play a vital role in our communities, but their pay often does not reflect the value of their work. **HB24-1312** provides a \$1,200 refundable tax credit to certain child care and health care workers, helping support the people who provide children and families with the care they need.

**Understanding evictions in Colorado:** Babies and toddlers are more likely to be evicted from their homes than Americans of any other age. Colorado's rates of eviction have soared in recent years. But the state does not have a thorough, accessible statewide data system that reports information about evictions. **SB24-064** will improve the way Colorado collects and publishes data on eviction trends across the state, leading to better policy solutions to keep families housed.

## Building a Strong and Equitable Early Childhood System

**Child care licensing resources in languages other than English:** **HB24-1009** will help Coloradans who speak Spanish access child care licensing resources so that young children and their families can access quality care in the language they speak at home.

**An effective Colorado Department of Early Childhood:** The Colorado Department of Early Childhood, which began operating in 2022, is growing and supporting a wide variety of programs to support early childhood. **HB24-1332** extends the Department of Early Childhood's executive rulemaking authority to allow it to run effectively.

## Supporting Children's Health and Well-Being

**A better birth and postpartum care system:** Health care before, during, and after birth can shape the future for babies and their families. **HB24-1262** will improve data collection related to care during the perinatal period, identify ways to protect communities against health facility closures, create a map of maternal health care deserts, and build a process for reporting discrimination.

**Support for reproductive health care:** **SJR24-008** highlights the importance of funding for health clinics that are part of Colorado's Family Planning Program. It demonstrates Colorado's support for making sure everyone has access to family planning and reproductive health care.

**Healthy School Meals for All:** In 2023-24, students across the state had access to free breakfast and lunch in schools through the Healthy School Meals for All program, which voters approved in 2022. The program faced funding challenges in its first year due to a combination of high enrollment, a change to the federal reimbursement rate, and the rising costs of food. The Joint Budget Committee identified a solution to fund universal school meals through the 2025-26 school year to make sure kids can continue to access healthy food at school.

The Colorado Children's Campaign is the leading voice for kids and their families at the state Capitol. Our mission is to ensure *every chance for every child*. When we work together, we can find systemic solutions to the challenges that prevent kids from reaching their full potential.