

Clayton's 2022 Early Childhood Policy Priorities



Expanding Access to High-Quality Early Care and Learning Opportunities

An abundance of research shows that high-quality early learning results in tangible learning benefits for our youngest students, leading to long-term educational success. Likewise, self-sufficient, thriving families are economically sustained by parents' ability to work and earn a living, free from worry about safe and nurturing care for their young children. Yet here in Colorado, the past decade has seen a steady decline in the availability of affordable, quality child care and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this situation. The problem is particularly acute for parents experiencing poverty, whose ability to support their families is hindered not only by extremely limited child care options but also costs far beyond their financial reach. We believe that equitable access to early learning and development opportunities is integral to the futures of all families in Colorado, as well as the economic vitality of the entire state. That is why Clayton is

excited by the opportunity to partner with educators, concerned citizens, and policymakers throughout the state to implement a new cabinet-level Department of Early Childhood and expand voluntary, universal preschool services to all four-year-olds in Colorado. We also are committed to supporting our early childhood educators through a refundable tax credit while ongoing conversations around increasing the compensation for our early childhood workforce continue at the state and federal levels.



Promoting Positive Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

Colorado currently lacks the infrastructure needed for all families to thrive during the perinatal, birthing, and postpartum periods. This is especially true for families of color, Indigenous families, undocumented families, and economically disadvantaged families. Building on the successful passage of the 2021 comprehensive Birth Equity Bill Package, Clayton is excited to work alongside partners to extend the Colorado Children's Health Insurance Program known as CHP+. This program provides full comprehensive health care benefits for undocumented pregnant people and extends benefits for 12-months of continuous postpartum coverage for those who received prenatal and birthing care through the program. *Continued on the next page.*

With more than 30 years of frontline expertise, Clayton is uniquely positioned to become Colorado's hub for innovative work in early childhood development. Investing in young children is one of the most powerful levers to create justice, opportunity, and equity. To realize that future, we must work to transform the systems and beliefs that perpetuate racism and inequity. Clayton influences systems leaders through policy and advocacy informed by our work with children and families, and the research and innovation generated from that work. We work to advance the field by sharing knowledge and tools to enhance the quality of early childhood development across the country. Finally, we partner with parents, educators, and the community to amplify their voices to advocate for local, state, and federal policy change.

Learn more at

ClaytonEarlyLearning.org/advocacy

For more information, please contact the
Clayton Early Learning
Policy & Advocacy team.

Christina Walker
Director, Policy and Advocacy
303.393.5623
cwalker@claytonearlylearning.org

Kayla Frawley
Manager, Policy and Advocacy
303.393.5646
kfrawley@claytonearlylearning.org

Holley Murphy
Policy Analyst
303-398-8558
hmurphy@claytonearlylearning.org

Geoffrey Nagle
Chief of External Impact
504-432-6226
gnagle@claytonearlylearning.org

2022 Early Childhood Policy Priorities for Colorado



Clayton also recognizes the inherent societal value of healthy families as both a moral and an economic imperative for a sustainable and prosperous future for Colorado.

That is why we are committed to our ongoing partnerships and engage in conversations to properly and appropriately implement an accessible and affordable paid family and medical leave program, which was approved by Colorado voters in November 2020. We know that in addition to the health benefits of family and medical leave, research shows that paid leave benefits workers and employers while being good for the economy. When families have access to paid leave, they are less likely to experience postpartum depression, have a higher likelihood of achieving family economic security, and have a longer duration of breastfeeding.

Strengthening Colorado Families

At Clayton, we know that when parents are healthy financially, emotionally, mentally, and physically, their children thrive. Too many Colorado families face food insecurity, unstable or unsafe housing, barriers to basic health care, and racism – exposing parents and children to toxic levels of stress. Those issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Coping with such critical survival issues repeatedly, and over long periods of time, causes profound and lasting implications for even the youngest children, stalling healthy development and their capacity to learn and succeed. We know that families who are healthy contribute to Colorado's sustainable and prosperous future. This is why, alongside our partners and families, we are excited to support changes to our state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. By increasing the rate of payments, we will provide families with a stronger safety net that is reflective of the actual cost of living in Colorado – especially given the recent rising inflation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, by listening to the experiences of past and current TANF recipients, Colorado policymakers have learned ways to improve the program to make it more family-friendly and make TANF easier to access for those who need it. Clayton is also supportive of decreasing the tax burden that currently exists on products that are considered basic essentials – particularly diapers for babies and adults and feminine hygiene products.

About Clayton's Community Ambassador Program

The Clayton Community Ambassador Program partners with interested parents, educators, staff, and members of our community to highlight the leadership of parents, and community members in state policy and advocacy. This program builds the confidence and skills to become a successful child and family advocate. Based on the belief that the most influential leaders for change are those directly affected by policy decisions, participants in this program develop knowledge around policy and advocacy, inform the policy process, and engage in advocacy opportunities with state policymakers.

The Program is participant-directed with a ladders-to-leadership capacity-building model. To ensure we meet the needs of all Ambassadors, Clayton incorporates partnerships and opportunities with other organizations and provides professional networking opportunities, through a straightforward and comprehensive lens. Clayton is committed to supporting our community members to learn the skills they need to be the changemakers our communities need to build a stronger and more equitable future for Colorado.



Nurturing Families. Discovering Solutions. Advancing Change.

www.claytonearlylearning.org