



2019 Early Childhood Policy Priorities for Colorado

As Colorado's leading catalyst in providing early care and education, Clayton Early Learning proudly provides subject matter expertise to illuminate issues impacting Colorado's youngest children and their families. Through our extensive, nationally recognized work in the field of early childhood education, we know that the most effective influence on a child's future occurs in the first five years of life. Given that fact, and in furtherance of our vision for a world where all children are prepared for school and life, we find these issues worthy of our attention.

Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) This critical program was updated in 2018 to address inequities in providing child care assistance to low-income families, allowing parents to go to work, school or job-training knowing their children are receiving high-quality care and early learning opportunities. This two-generation approach exemplifies efficient use of resources by addressing the needs of children while also helping parents achieve self-sufficiency. We support current efforts to expand this, and all programs that enhance foundational experiences for every child in Colorado.

Full Funding for Full-day Kindergarten and Expanded Pre-K An abundance of research shows that high-quality Pre-K and full-day kindergarten result in tangible learning benefits for our youngest students, leading to long-term educational success. Yet, even with supports like the Colorado Preschool Program and the ECARE expansion, many schools in Colorado offer these early educational opportunities only as tuition-based options, making them out of reach for thousands of families. We join with educators and concerned citizens throughout the state in supporting efforts to provide these early learning opportunities to families and eliminating financial barriers that widen the opportunity gap among Colorado's children.

Early Childhood Workforce A teaching workforce equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to provide high-quality early care and learning is an essential component in ensuring that all Colorado children are valued, healthy and thriving. Our state's strong economy and low unemployment rates have exacerbated an already challenging shortage of professional early childhood teachers. As operators of our own Educare school in northeast Denver, serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and our extensive work providing top-tier training for early educators, we favor efforts to better support our workforce, such as creating an Early Childhood Educator Tax Credit, including early childhood as an option within an established Teacher Cadet program and promoting T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship opportunities.

Early Childhood Suspensions and Expulsions The most effective teaching opportunities for young children occur in nurturing environments that foster healthy student-teacher relationships. That's why we are in favor of measures that support non-punitive behavior management, while greatly limiting suspensions and expulsions in early childhood settings to all but the most serious cases in which school safety is at risk. Removing a young child from school reflects a failure to address a child's underlying needs, and can initiate a negative chain reaction that impacts future academic progress and long-term attitudes about school. Given the alarming disproportions in expulsions of boys, children of color, and students with disabilities, these extreme actions cause irreparable harm to children most needing support.

For more information about policy and advocacy work at Clayton Early Learning, please contact Christina Walker, cwalker@claytonearlylearning.org, or 303.393.5623



Clayton Early Learning is proud to partner with the Colorado Children's Campaign to convene the newly formed coalition, Raise Colorado. The coalition connects organizations, businesses, families, and government to better support all of Colorado's children and families during the prenatal and earliest years. Through public awareness, policy development and advocacy efforts, Raise Colorado works to ensure more equitable, healthier communities, a stronger workforce, and a more robust economy now and in the future.

HB19-1122 Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC). This bill would strengthen the state's Maternal Mortality Review Committee by establishing it into statute to address rising rates of maternal death. With ample resources to ensure robust participation and effective recommendations, this professional board would develop recommendations to address preventable maternal deaths in Colorado.

Infant Mortality Prevention. Every child who dies in their first year of life is a tragedy for that family and community. While Colorado has a relatively low infant mortality rate, African-American babies in their first 12 months die at more than twice the rate of White babies. The Raise Colorado Infant Mortality Prevention Workgroup is exploring legislative and other policy solutions to prevent infant deaths and decrease the racial disparity in outcomes.

SB19-063 Infant and Child Care Shortage Strategic Action Plan. Since 2010 Colorado has experienced a steep decline in the availability of infant and family child care. This legislation would direct the Department of Human Services to conduct a detailed analysis of the issue, engage diverse stakeholders, and recommend policy actions.

HB19-1052 Special Districts for Early Childhood Development. Colorado allows the creation of special tax districts to provide a range of public services for the good of local communities including fire protection, parks and recreation and health. This bill would allow local communities to create special districts to provide early childhood development services.

HB19-1170 Residential Tenants Health & Safety Act. Pregnant people and newborns need access to safe and sanitary living conditions to protect their health and development. This bill would strengthen a tenant's ability to resolve uninhabitable conditions.

SB19-188 Paid Family Leave. In the first months of life babies need time with parents and other caregivers to develop caring, consistent relationships that foster early brain connections, which form the foundation for all learning and relationships that follow. This pending bill would create a paid family leave program for all workers in Colorado.

HB19-1038 Dental Benefit for Pregnant People Covered by CHP+. Nearly 900 pregnant people with health insurance through the Child Health Plan CHP+ do not have coverage for dental care. For a small cost, this bill would add dental benefits for these mothers, improving their health, their pregnancy outcomes, and the health of their new babies.

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