

# 2021 Legislative Wrap Up

## Colorado Takes Historic Strides for Children and Families



### Early Childhood Education and Development

#### **New State Department for Early Childhood Education, HB 21-1304**

Creates the department of early childhood, which will expand access to early childhood opportunities, coordinate services, support a mixed delivery system of early childhood, prioritize the interests and input of children, parents, providers, and the community, and unify administration of early childhood programs and services. Creates a Transition Working Group and Transition Advisory Group to develop a transition plan for the new department and to make recommendations for implementation of universal preschool.

**Regulation of Family Child Care Homes, HB 21-1222** Requires that licensed family child care homes be classified as residences for the purposes of licensure and local regulations, including zoning, land use development, fire and life safety, and building codes.



#### **Increase Capacity Early Childhood Care &**

#### **Education, SB 21-236**

Creates four new grant programs to increase capacity for early childhood care and education. Specifically, the bill creates the following programs: the employer-based child care facility grant program; the early care and education recruitment and retention grant and scholarship program; the child care teacher salary grant program; and the community innovation and resilience for care and learning equity (CIRCLE) grant program. The bill also continues the child-care sustainability and the emerging and expanding child-care grant programs.

**School Finance Act, SB 21-268** Includes a provision to ensure that waivers to provide services for children under three through the Colorado Preschool Program continues at existing funding levels in Denver and Cañon City, a technical fix to a student count issue that codifies a 20-year practice in statute.

*Clayton Early Learning is an innovation hub that fosters thriving, equitable communities by partnering with families to **nurture** a whole child, whole family approach to the early years, **discover** what works, and **advance** systems change. Clayton is proud to have provided subject matter expertise, created and led coalitions, and highlighted parent and staff leadership to inform the direction of the 2021 legislative session. With the well-being of Colorado's youngest children and their families at heart, we appreciate our legislators' thoughtful and bold approaches in addressing critical issues affecting children, their families and their caregivers as our communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of this forward-thinking effort, Colorado is poised to take several positive steps to improve the lives of our youngest children, families and their communities. From creating a new early childhood state department, removing barriers for Colorado's immigrant populations, reforming our tax policy to promote equity, to passing a historic birth equity bill package, Colorado took major steps towards making our state the best place to raise a family.*

### Healthy Families, Healthy Children

#### **Birth Equity Bill Package Direct Entry Midwifery Sunset, SB 21-101**

Implements the recommendations of the department of regulatory agencies on the registration of direct-entry midwives by: continuing the registration requirements for seven years, adding licensed birth centers to the locations where they may practice, and diminishes unnecessary barriers for midwives to be more accessible to communities.

*Learn more about Clayton's Policy and Advocacy work at [ClaytonEarlyLearning.org/advocacy](https://ClaytonEarlyLearning.org/advocacy)*

## 2021 Legislative Wrap Up



**Birth Equity Bill Package Protecting Pregnant People in the Perinatal Time Period, SB 21-193** Makes changes to statute concerning care for pregnant persons, which addresses medical malpractice insurance coverage, policies for health facilities that provide labor and delivery services, and the treatment of pregnant persons in correctional facilities.

**Birth Equity Bill Package Maternal Health Providers, SB 21-194** Promotes the provision of high-quality, cost-effective healthcare services related to labor and delivery, prevents risk in subsequent pregnancies, and does not discriminate based on the type of provider or facility. The bill also requires licensed labor and delivery service providers to accept transfers from a home or birthing center, allows a person who was eligible during pregnancy under Medicaid and CHP+ to remain continuously eligible postpartum for 12 months, and expands the scope of Colorado's Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

**Reproductive Health Care Program, SB 21-009** Creates the reproductive health care program that provides contraceptive methods and counseling services to immigrants lacking documentation.

**Family Planning Service for Eligible Individuals, SB 21-025** Requires the department of health care policy and financing to seek federal authorization to provide family planning services to individuals with incomes less than 250% of the federal poverty level.

**Peer Support Professionals Behavioral Health, HB 21-1021** Requires the department of human services to establish procedures to approve recovery support services organizations for reimbursement of peer support professional services. The bill permits a recovery support services organization to charge and submit for reimbursement from the medical assistance program certain eligible peer support services provided by peer support professionals.

**Insurance Coverage Mental Health Wellness Exam, HB 21-1068** Adds a requirement, as part of mandatory health insurance coverage of preventive health care services, that health plans cover an annual mental health wellness examination of up to 60 minutes that is performed by a qualified mental health care provider, without deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance.

**Standardized Health Benefit Plan Colorado Option, HB 21-1232** Requires the commissioner of insurance in the department of regulatory agencies to establish a standardized health benefit plan to be offered by health insurance carriers in the individual and small group markets. The standardized plan must: offer health-care coverage at the bronze, silver, and gold levels; be available through the Colorado health benefit exchange; be created through a stakeholder engagement process; provide first-dollar, predictable coverage for certain high value services; and comply with state and federal law.

**Creation of Financial Empowerment Office, SB 21-148** Creates the financial empowerment office in the department of law to grow the financial resilience and well-being of Coloradans through specified community-derived goals and strategies.



*Bill signing with Governor Polis*

## 2021 Legislative Wrap Up

### Support for Working Families

**Removing Barriers to Economic Opportunity for our Immigrant Neighbors, SB 21-199** Eliminates the current requirement of verification of lawful presence to receive professional and business licenses as well as benefits pursuant to federal stimulus, eligible state and local public benefits, and public contracting or grant requirements.

**Tax Reform that Promotes Equity, HB 21-1311& HB 21-1312** Makes substantial reforms to Colorado's income tax and deductions and credit provisions, including an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit to 25% of the federal credit, the funding of a state Child Tax Credit, and an increase in the Business Personal Property deduction available to small businesses.



*Parent Ambassadors  
at the State Capitol*

**Child Health and Family Economic Security, SB 21-027** Requires CDHS to contract with diaper distribution centers to administer a diaper and diapering essentials distribution program.

**Local Government Authority Promote Affordable Housing Units, HB 21-1117** Clarifies the existing authority of local governments to utilize their land use ordinances to regulate development or redevelopment and promote the construction of new affordable housing units.

### Clayton Parent and Staff Ambassadors Drive Change in their Community

The Clayton Parent Ambassadors exercised their leadership and advocacy skills, making major contributions to the unprecedented success of Colorado's 2021 legislative session. This innovative program, based at the Educare Denver school on the Clayton campus, highlights the Head Start and Early Head Start parents who participate in specialized training with community partners, network with professionals, and learn the skills needed to become changemakers within their community. Based on the belief that the most influential catalysts for change are those directly affected by policy decisions, this unique program empowers parent representatives to communicate effectively with lawmakers, adding an authentic perspective to conversations that impact children and families in Colorado. Clayton recently expanded the Ambassador Program to include civically-minded staff members, who are interested in developing knowledge around policy and advocacy, informing the policy process, and engaging in advocacy opportunities to build a stronger and more equitable community.

For more detail about the 2021 legislation that shaped these pivotal results for Colorado's children and families, please contact

Christina Walker  
Director, Policy and Advocacy  
303.393.5623  
[cwalker@claytonearlylearning.org](mailto:cwalker@claytonearlylearning.org)

Kayla Frawley  
Manager, Policy and Advocacy  
303.393.5646  
[kfrawley@claytonearlylearning.org](mailto:kfrawley@claytonearlylearning.org)

