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**Bennet Celebrates Launch of Colorado’s First COVID-19
Testing Site for Early Childhood at Clayton Early Learning,
Applauds Colorado Education Community’s Partnership with
COVIDCheck Colorado**

*Senator Discusses His Health Force Proposal to Train and Deploy Hundreds of
Thousands of Americans to Support a National Strategy for Testing and Contact
Tracing*

For Photos From Today’s Event Click [HERE](#)

Denver — Today, Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet visited Clayton Early Learning to celebrate the launch of Colorado’s first early childhood Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) testing site and applauded the state’s education community—from early childhood education through higher education—for partnering with Gary Community Investments’ COVIDCheck Colorado testing program. Bennet also discussed his Health Force proposal with U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), and his other efforts in the Senate, which would provide the public health infrastructure necessary to support a national testing and contact tracing strategy and help schools and the economy open and remain open.



From Left to Right: U.S. Senator Michael Bennet; Michelle Marks, Chancellor, University of Colorado Denver; Becky Crowe, CEO, Clayton Early Learning; Brandon Garner, parent and president of Clayton's Policy Council; Mike Johnston, CEO, Gary Community Investments

In offering COVID-19 testing to its community, Clayton joins [COVIDCheck Colorado's](#) K12 and university partners in a collective effort to keep students of all ages as safe as possible throughout their academic journey.

"COVIDCheck Colorado provides access to fast, affordable, and accurate testing for the school community. Gary Community Investments, Clayton Early Learning, DPS, the University of Colorado Denver, and others are filling the void being left by Washington's inaction," **said Bennet**. "We need to pass and implement a national strategy for universal testing and contact tracing that allows us all to get back to school and back to work."

"We started COVIDCheck Colorado because there are too many students across the state who can't afford for us to question whether or not to open their schools," **said Mike Johnston, Gary Community Investments CEO**. "No matter where students are in their educational journey, they're depending on us to provide the safest environment possible so that they can experience the very best of what their school has to offer. As a former education leader, Senator Bennet, knows exactly what's at stake, and we look forward to collaborating to ensure that critical

public health resources like COVID-19 testing and contact tracing remain accessible to schools for the foreseeable future."

"Throughout the pandemic, communities around the country have a growing awareness that unless the system to care for our youngest children works, no one works," **commented Becky Crowe, president and CEO at Clayton Early Learning.** "Most of our families and our teachers don't have the luxury of working from home right now. If we put equity at the center, children and families who are economically vulnerable and the essential, early childhood workforce need to be at the front of the line when it comes to accessing regular COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, and an eventual vaccine. This is a moral and an economic imperative, which is why we are grateful for this incredible collective effort."

"As Colorado's largest school district, it's critically important that we have resources in place that can help protect our staff, students and the larger community," **said Susana Cordova, Superintendent of Denver Public Schools.** "The testing provided by Gary Community Investments is a key piece in our ability to welcome students back into our schools. The health and safety of our staff and students remain a top priority for us as a district, and is top of mind for our families. By giving our staff access to a free test every two weeks, we'll be able to track cases quickly and halt potential outbreaks before they emerge."

"To keep our community safe and ensure our students' ongoing success, we need timely and accurate information about the prevalence of COVID-19 in our classrooms, offices, and residence halls," **said Michelle Marks, Chancellor of University of Colorado Denver.** "We're so grateful to COVIDCheck Colorado for providing rapid testing results for our campus, which enables us to monitor, track, and analyze the ongoing situation we face today."

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have made clear that schools at every level are the economic engines of their communities. When young children and youth have the opportunity to learn in-person or attend day care, their families can return to work. When students are able to return to college, they can continue to prepare to enter the workforce. Today, having access to fast, accurate, and affordable COVID-19 testing through [COVIDCheck Colorado](#) is one of the most critical strategies schools and universities in our state can leverage to safely reopen.

Background

Health Force

[Health Force](#) is inspired by the Depression-era Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, which similarly tapped the unemployed to help the nation recover from a sharp economic downturn. The Health Force would create a federally-supported and locally-managed program to train and deploy essential public and community health frontline workers, who could conduct testing, contact tracing, or eventual vaccine administration. These positions would complement America's highly trained and skilled medical professionals already fighting on the front lines. The workforce would be trained by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and managed by state and local public health agencies across the country.

A national Health Force would be responsible for:

- Conducting contact tracing;
- Administering COVID-19 tests, including antibody tests;
- Providing COVID-19 vaccinations (when available);
- Sharing COVID-19 public health messages with community members, including debunking myths and misperceptions;
- Providing data entry in support of epidemiological surveillance and to meet broader health information system requirements;
- Providing community-based and home-based services, including food and medical supply delivery to elderly and immunocompromised individuals;
- Providing palliative and hospice care;
- Providing other public health-related services, as needed.

COVIDCheck Colorado

[COVIDCheck Colorado](#) is a social benefit enterprise of Gary Community Investment Company, which is part of the Gary Community Investments umbrella organization. It represents a philanthropic health consortium whose mission is to help Coloradans navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and get back to their community safely. COVIDCheck Colorado complements organizations' strategies to reopen by providing access to accurate and affordable COVID-19 testing, symptom tracking and tools to support public health departments' contact tracing efforts as a way to help Coloradans safely return to school, work and daily life. COVIDCheck Colorado works in accordance with guidelines from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment as well as an advisory board of public health leaders and HIPAA-compliant partners.

Gary Community Investments

[Gary Community Investments](#), which includes the Delaware public benefit corporation known as the Gary Community Investments Company and The Piton Foundation, invests in for-profit and philanthropic solutions for Colorado's low-income children and their families. It was founded by Denver oilman Sam Gary with the belief that business and philanthropy can—and should—work together to create opportunities for those who need it most. Gary Community Investments is committed to investing in quality early childhood and youth development systems, expanding sustainable economic opportunities, and developing and supporting programs that create healthy family and community environments. By aligning all of our assets with our mission, we make creative investments that not only yield a financial return, but can also improve the lives of Colorado's children.

Clayton Early Learning

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. Committed to the belief that healthy early childhood development offers one of the most powerful levers for ending poverty and inequality, Clayton applies a unique two-generation approach that demonstrates what's

possible in the early years, and the positive impact that it has for children and families over time. Home to Colorado's only Educare school, a nationally recognized model supporting children from birth to age five, and their families, Clayton also influences systems change through our research and evaluation services, professional development for educators and leaders, and policy and advocacy work at the state and federal levels. Visit www.claytonearlylearning.org for more information.

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