

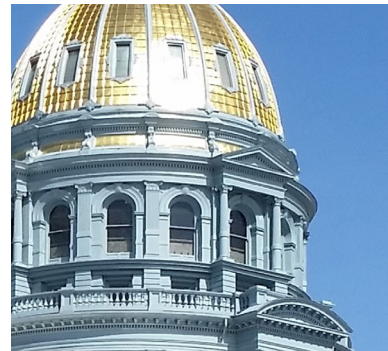
# 2018

Report to the Colorado General Assembly

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## Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission



Prepared by Legislative Council Staff  
Research Publication No. 708  
December 2018

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# **Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission**

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Senator Beth Martinez Humenik  
Senator Michael Merrifield

Representative Brittany Pettersen  
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***December 2018***

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December 2018

To Members of the Seventy-first General Assembly:

Submitted herewith is the final report of the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission. This commission was created pursuant to Section 26-6.5-203, Colorado Revised Statutes. The purpose of this commission is to study issues related to early childhood and school readiness in order to improve the state's early childhood policies.

At its meeting on October 15, 2018, the Legislative Council reviewed the report of this commission. A motion to forward this report and the bill therein for consideration in the 2019 session was approved.

Sincerely,

/s/ Representative Crisanta Duran  
Chair

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*This report is also available online at:*

*<https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/early-childhood-and-school-readiness-legislative-commission/2018-regular-session>*

## **Commission Charge**

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Pursuant to state law (Section 26-6.5-203, C.R.S.), the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission (ECSRLC) may meet at least four times per year to study issues concerning early childhood and school readiness. Topics to be studied include: health care, mental health, parental involvement, family support, child care, and early learning. The commission is required to solicit input from the public, especially from those who have expertise in early childhood and school readiness issues. The commission is also required to consult with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, which is a group focused on improving outcomes for young children from birth to age eight, to discuss policies concerning early childhood and school readiness.

## **Commission Activities**

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The ECSRLC held four meetings during the 2018 interim. Presentations were made by state departments, early childhood professionals, members of the business and nonprofit communities, and members of the public on a wide range of subjects related to early childhood and school readiness, including:

- utilizing a two-generation approach;
- child fatality prevention recommendations;
- community-based resource centers;
- early childhood innovation within the business community;
- teacher shortages;
- school readiness, literacy, and preschool; and
- early identification of students with dyslexia.

The following sections discuss the commission's activities during the 2018 interim.

## **Two-Generation Approach**

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The commission heard from representatives from the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Warren Village, and the Community College of Aurora about two-generation (two-gen) initiatives and programs that provide opportunities to meet the needs of both parents and children by providing services and supports in the areas of early childhood education, social capital, postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets, and health and well-being. The commission learned about initiatives that foster a two-gen approach by creating partnerships with child care centers, employers, and other community organizations, and discussed ways to provide integrated programs and services to help families reach major economic milestones by harnessing solutions to address both parents and children effectively.

## Child Fatality Prevention

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The commission was briefed by representatives from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and CDHS on the Child Fatality Prevention System and the recommendations put forth in 2017 by the Colorado State Child Fatality Prevention Review Team on preventing child maltreatment and child fatalities. These recommendations include behavioral health promotion; youth suicide prevention; primary seat belt laws; paid leave for families; evidence-based home visitation; quality, affordable child care; and education on firearm safety.

## Community-Based Resource Centers

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Representatives from the Family Resource Center Association and the Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance spoke to the commission about the work their organizations are doing to provide services and supports to families throughout the state by using comprehensive, coordinated case management and acting as a family-friendly access point to the wider community by tailoring the focus of local resource centers to the culture and needs of each community. The commission learned that the missions and purposes of these organizations are to align resources within communities and the state to effectively serve young children and their families, and to increase and sustain the quality, accessibility, capacity, and affordability of early childhood services.

*Commission recommendations.* The commission approved two letters to the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) requesting additional funding for family resource centers and early childhood councils.

## Early Childhood Innovation in Business

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Representatives from Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC), GroundFloor Media, and St. Andrews Construction Services Corp. briefed the commission on current business practices in Colorado that support early childhood education and child care for employees. They explained that this support is provided through family-friendly workplace initiatives and innovation in identifying child care issues, and help to address child care shortages within communities.

## Teacher Shortages

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Presenters from the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) spoke to the commission about teacher shortages and teacher preparation, and how CDHE's Master Plan addresses these issues. They spoke about grants and programs to recruit and retain teachers in rural areas, including the Teacher Cadet Program of Colorado and the Rural Colorado Grow Your Own Educator grant.

*Commission recommendations.* The commission recommended two bills, Bills A and B, related to the shortage of early childhood education teachers, and approved a letter to the JBC requesting funding to support recruiting and retaining early childhood educators. Bill A allows high school students interested in early childhood education to participate in the existing Teacher Cadet Program. The bill

was approved by Legislative Council at its October 15, 2018, meeting. Bill B would have created an income tax credit for early childhood educators, but the bill was not approved by Legislative Council.

## **School Readiness, Literacy, and Preschool**

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The commission heard from representatives from the Colorado Department of Education on the importance of early intervention in closing achievement gaps, the success of early literacy programs, kindergarten readiness, and the need to focus on child development during the preschool through third grade years to ensure that all kids are reading by third grade.

## **Early Identification of Dyslexia**

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The commission heard from parents of students who have been identified as having dyslexia, and the challenges they faced prior to and after the identification. The commission discussed the need for a clear definition of dyslexia, training for current teachers and those in teacher preparation programs in the awareness, identification, and remediation of dyslexia, and a statewide diagnostic assessment to screen for and identify dyslexia early on in order to provide appropriate strategies and instructional programming for those students who are identified.

*Commission recommendations.* The commission requested that two bills be drafted related to identifying and addressing dyslexia and other literacy challenges. Neither bill was approved by the commission.

## **Other Policy Areas**

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In addition to the other topics discussed above, the commission discussed possible legislation related to the international building code as it applies to family childcare homes, funding for full-day kindergarten, and discipline in early childhood through third grade.

*Commission recommendations.* The commission requested a bill draft to clarify the facility requirements for licensed family childcare homes related to fire and life safety standards. The bill draft was not approved by the commission. The commission also requested a bill draft to allow funding that school districts would have received for high school students who graduated early to be put toward funding full-day kindergarten, but the bill draft was not approved by the commission. In addition, the commission requested that a bill be drafted related to the suspension and expulsion of students in early childhood through third grade, but the bill request was withdrawn and no draft was prepared.

## Summary of Recommendations

As a result of the commission's activities, the commission recommended two bills the Legislative Council for consideration in the 2019 session. At its meeting on October 15, 2018, the Legislative Council approved one recommended bill for introduction. The approved bill is described below.

### ***Bill A — Expand Teacher Cadet Program Early Childhood Education***

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This bill clarifies that high school students who are interested in early childhood education may participate in the Teacher Cadet Program. Currently, the Teacher Cadet Program supports high school students who are interested in pursuing teaching careers in rural Colorado.

### ***Commission Letter 1***

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The commission approved sending a letter to the JBC requesting that it increase the General Fund appropriation to the CDHS by \$1.5 million to fund family support and parent education services at family resource centers in Colorado.

### ***Commission Letter 2***

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The commission approved sending a letter to the JBC requesting that it appropriate \$3.0 million to the CDHS to fund the statewide network of early childhood councils.

### ***Commission Letter 3***

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The commission approved sending a letter to the JBC requesting that it appropriate money from the General Fund to the CDHS for assistance for early childhood education advancement.



## Resource Materials

Meeting summaries are prepared for each meeting of the commission and contain all handouts provided to the commission. The summaries of meetings and attachments are available at the Division of Archives, 1313 Sherman Street, Denver (303-866-2055). The listing below contains the dates of commission meetings and the topics discussed at those meetings. Meeting summaries are also available on our website at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/content/committees>

### Meeting Date and Topics Discussed

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July 10, 2018

- ◆ Overview of bill request and fiscal note process
- ◆ Update from Early Childhood Leadership Commission
- ◆ Updates from the Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department Health Care Policy and Financing, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

August 8, 2018

- ◆ Two-Generation Approach in Action
- ◆ Child fatality prevention recommendations
- ◆ Update from the Family Resource Center Association
- ◆ Update from the Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance
- ◆ School readiness, literacy, and preschool

August 20, 2018

- ◆ Teacher shortage, putting the plan into action
- ◆ The employer's landscape for early childhood
- ◆ Early identification of children with dyslexia
- ◆ Consideration of bill draft requests

October 2, 2018

- ◆ Status update on Pay for Success Program
- ◆ Prenatal, Infant, and Toddler Coalition
- ◆ Final approval of bill drafts

First Regular Session  
Seventy-second General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO

BILL A

LLS NO. 19-0199.01 Brita Darling x2241

HOUSE BILL

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HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Wilson, Buckner, Pettersen

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Martinez Humenik, Priola

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House Committees

Senate Committees

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A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING SUPPORTING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' INTEREST IN  
102 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH THE TEACHER CADET  
103 PROGRAM.

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Bill Summary

*(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov/>.)*

**Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission.** The bill clarifies that high school students who are interested in early childhood education may participate in the teacher cadet program.

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment. *Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute. Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.*

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1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2           **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **amend 23-76-105** as  
3 follows:

4           **23-76-105. Teacher cadet program.** On or before July 1, 2017,  
5 the department of higher education shall establish teacher cadet programs  
6 in identified rural schools and school districts. Money may be provided  
7 to local school districts, charter schools, or the charter school institute,  
8 any of which may contract with a board of cooperative services, to  
9 identify and support high school students who are interested in pursuing  
10 teaching careers in rural Colorado, and INCLUDING EARLY CHILDHOOD  
11 EDUCATION. TEACHER CADET PROGRAMS ARE ENCOURAGED TO IDENTIFY  
12 students, including students with disabilities, who reflect the geographic,  
13 racial, and ethnic diversity of the state. The department of higher  
14 education and the department of education shall evaluate the effectiveness  
15 of the teacher cadet program every five years.

16           **SECTION 2. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
17 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the  
18 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August  
19 2, 2019, if adjournment sine die is on May 3, 2019); except that, if a  
20 referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the  
21 state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act  
22 within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect  
23 unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in  
24 November 2020 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the  
25 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.



## General Assembly State of Colorado Denver

October 2, 2018

Dear Members of the Joint Budget Committee:

We, the members of the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission, respectfully request that the General Assembly increase the General Fund appropriation to the Colorado Department of Human Services by \$1.5 million to fund family support and parent education services at Family Resource Centers (FRCs) around Colorado.

This request in state funding will increase the number of families that can be served, and specifically provide:

- additional professional staff at FRCs to increase the number of families that receive coordinated case management services to help them become more self-reliant from 1,404 in 2017 to over 4,200 families annually;
- resources for the implementation of quality standards, tracking and reporting of family outcomes, and training and technical assistance for Family Resource Center staff; and
- support for ongoing projects fostering statewide cooperation between FRCs, the Early Childhood Councils, childcare resource and referral agencies, informal childcare options, and avoid duplication of services.

In 1993, the Colorado legislature passed the Family Resource Center Act (Section 26-18-101, C.R.S.) to create a network of Family Resource Centers across the state to provide community-based support services to vulnerable families and children. As defined by Colorado Statute, an FRC is a "unified single point of entry where vulnerable families, individuals, children, and youth in communities...can obtain information, assessment of needs, and referral to delivery of family services."<sup>1</sup> FRCs use a Two-Generation approach with a dual focus on the needs of both children and parents to provide multiple services and supports to families through strengths-based family development. In FY 2016-17, the 29 Family Resource Centers associated with the Family Resource Center Association (FRCA), the intermediary agency supporting the FRCs, served over 16,000 families and over 30,000 individuals.

In FY 2015-16, an additional \$750,000 was added to the state budget for family support case management utilizing Family Resource Centers located throughout Colorado. The funding was allocated to ten Family Resource Centers through a competitive grant application. An evaluation of the family support services provided by the ten FRCs in FY 2016-17 showed:

- 1,404 families received family support case management;
- FRCs provided 9,301 distinct services to families;
- families showed statistically significant gains in income, cash savings, housing, employment, debt management, food security, child education, childcare, physical health, mental health, and transportation;

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<sup>1</sup>26-18-102, C.R.S. (2018)

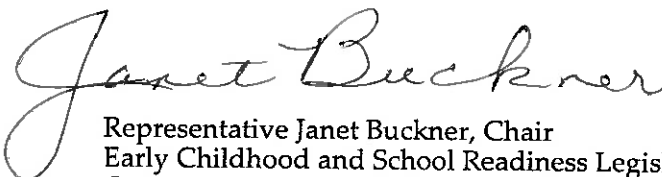
- sixty-two percent of these families had a household income at or below 100% of federal poverty level, demonstrating that the FRCs serve Colorado's most vulnerable families; and
- families had significantly higher scores after receiving FRC services on all strengthening families protective factors that reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) were created to provide a single point of entry to case management, which ensures families can successfully navigate community supports promoting parenting and self-sufficiency. Case managers in FRCs work with each family to assess the entire needs of the family, and help provide formal and informal supports so families can achieve their goals. In order to increase community-based family support services, additional funding is requested to increase family support case management to more families in more FRCs across Colorado. This increase in funding will help FRCs meet the statutory requirement that all FRCs provide family support case management.

The current appropriation of \$752,704 supports family support case management in ten FRCs along with state staff to administer the contracts, funding to provide training, and also supports data collection and program evaluation. An additional \$1,500,000 in the FY 2018-19 appropriation would increase the number of Family Resource Centers that provide statutorily mandated family support case management. It would ensure there is appropriate state staff to manage the contracts, and provide sufficient funding to continue data collection that measures program effectiveness and ensures the Family Resource Center staff are trained to provide best practices under the Two-Generation and Family Support models.

Please know that we appreciate the Joint Budget Committee's ongoing efforts to prioritize state funding and programs that meet the needs of Coloradans. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this appropriation request in more detail with you, and explore ways to foster greater collaboration between the Colorado Department of Human Services, counties and other stakeholders in coordinating services that result in financial security and resiliency for families. Thank you for taking the time to consider our request.

Sincerely,



Representative Janet Buckner, Chair  
Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative  
Commission

- c: Lieutenant Governor Donna Lynne, Co-Chair, Early Childhood Leadership Commission
- Anna Jo Haynes, Co-Chair, Early Childhood Leadership Commission
- Elsa Holguin, Co-Chair, Early Childhood Leadership Commission
- Mark Kling, Executive Director, Family Resource Center Association
- Reggie Bicha, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Human Services
- Representative Jonathan Singer, Chair, House Public Health and Human Services Committee
- Jim Smallwood, Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
- John Ziegler, Director, Joint Budget Committee Staff



# General Assembly State of Colorado Denver

October 2, 2018

Dear Members of the Joint Budget Committee:

We, the members of the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission, write to respectfully request that the General Assembly appropriate \$3 million per fiscal year annually from the General Fund to the Colorado Department of Human Services to fund the statewide network of Early Childhood Councils.

Colorado has increasingly committed resources to link together early learning, health, mental health, family support, and parent education so that families and young children have access to an equitable, high quality continuum of services and supports. Integral to this effort was the establishment in 1998 of pilot organizations to coordinate local early childhood services. By 2007, these pilots successfully built the foundation for the establishment of Colorado's network of Early Childhood Councils by the Colorado General Assembly. **Early Childhood Councils are locally organized and legislatively responsible for improving and sustaining the quality, availability, capacity, and accessibility of early childhood services and supports for children and families in communities throughout Colorado (Section 26-6.5-101, C.R.S.).**

Colorado is both fortunate and unique to have 34 local Early Childhood Councils (serving 61 of 64 counties) that focus on **increasing the quality of early learning programs and environments; expanding family resources and skills; and ensuring access to social, physical, and mental health services for young children.** Councils **increase the effectiveness of early childhood professionals** with training, coaching, and resources, which, in turn, helps children be prepared for kindergarten. Significantly, Councils are committed to closing the achievement gap for children who face multiple barriers, including those living in low-income families, by increasing the number and percentage of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers enrolled in high quality early care and learning programs.

Councils serve as a hub to create a seamless local early childhood system for partners, providers, caregivers, policymakers, and business leaders to coordinate, collaborate, and align resources. To meet the needs of their local communities Councils implement the following systems building functions:

- **Grant and Fiscal Management:** Stewarding funds to improve local early childhood services and supports and dispersing them to qualified providers and partners for effective service delivery implementation.
- **Partnerships and Engagement:** Convening community partners to share information and resources, identify issues, and problem solve, while advancing robust public engagement to elevate early childhood issues.
- **Capacity Building and Sustainability:** Providing continuous community-wide assessment, strategic planning, data collection, and monitoring to build and sustain local capacity for improvement of early childhood systems.

- **Advocacy and Policy Development:** Advocating and educating the community, policymakers, and families on policies that promote the healthy development of young children.
- **Professional Development and Leadership:** Advancing the knowledge and skills of early childhood providers, educators, and families to support the healthy development of young children.

While Colorado has made strides in aligning services for young children and their families, **some state assets, like the Early Childhood Councils, are not funded adequately nor supported effectively to meet their full potential.** These challenges limit communication between programs and complicates families' interactions with vital services and supports. Today, Councils are increasingly called upon from state partners to ensure coordinated local service delivery across the multiple programs that support young children and their families. The needs of families can be better met by fully investing in the infrastructure of a strong early childhood system in Colorado that aligns programs, allows for the blending of multiple financing streams, supports local innovation and leadership, promotes the sharing and tracking of data, and establishes common performance outcomes.

Early Childhood Councils are supported by the Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA), which is their nonprofit membership association. ECCLA provides Councils with support to increase their organizational capacity, delivers technical assistance and training, increases effective and coordinated communication, and measures and reports data on shared indicators to evaluate and enhance collective impact.

Collectively, this work is critical because the earliest years of a child's life are exceptionally important— this is the most sensitive period for brain development. The experiences children have during this time will shape the architecture of their brain and build the connections that allow them to develop lifelong skills like problem-solving, communication, self-control, and relationship building. Safe environments, protective and loving relationships, supportive communities, and access to care all foster healthy development. **Early investment in the health and well-being of Colorado's youngest children leads to healthy productive adults who contribute to a thriving Colorado.**

Funding for Early Childhood Councils has decreased over the last 10 years, while simultaneously they have taken on a larger scope of work including managing and/or facilitating Child Care Resource and Referral and Colorado Child Care Assistance Program contracts—all with fewer resources and personnel. Fortunately, Councils received a significant win during the last Legislative Session when the Joint Budget Committee invested \$1 million for FY 18/19 to support systems building efforts of the Early Childhood Councils. Prior to this decision, the last time Colorado invested state general funds in Councils was FY 11/12. The \$1 million allocation last year was a one-time investment and therefore concerns remain about the sustainability of this critical statewide network.

Members of the Joint Budget Committee

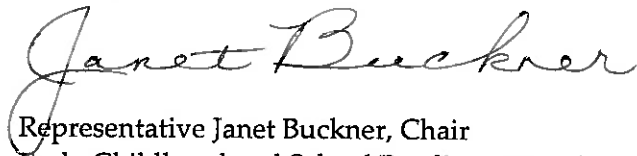
October 2, 2018

Page 3

The \$3 million annual funding requested in this letter would advance the momentum of the Joint Budget Committee's initial investment and provide necessary, stable funding for Early Childhood Councils to meet local needs and enable adequate local budget planning, which has been a challenge in recent years because funding has shifted so dramatically.

We appreciate the Joint Budget Committee's consideration of this request and your ongoing commitment to prioritize state funding and programs to meet the needs of our youngest Coloradans. We welcome any questions you may have as well as the opportunity to discuss this information in more detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Buckner". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Representative Janet Buckner, Chair  
Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative  
Commission





## General Assembly State of Colorado Denver

October 2, 2018

Dear Members of the Joint Budget Committee:

We, the members of the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission, write to respectfully request that, for the 2019-20 state fiscal year, the General Assembly appropriate money from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services for assistance for early childhood education advancement.

Research demonstrates that qualified early childhood education (ECE) professionals are key to children's positive early learning and development. And ECE professionals with specialized training and education in child development are more likely to provide high-quality care. Unfortunately, low wages and other factors often limit the ability of ECE professionals to increase their levels of educational attainment.

Also, the Teacher Shortages Report prepared by the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Education in response to House Bill 17-1003 and released on December 1, 2017, recognizes that Colorado is facing a shortage of qualified ECE professionals, identifying this as a high-demand area. Many communities across the state lack an effective, consistent workforce that families can trust to provide high-quality ECE and who will enable young children to thrive.

Recently, the Department of Human Services, with the Department of Education and in partnership with nonprofits and philanthropic agencies that focus on early childhood issues, studied the ECE workforce in Colorado. This study included a survey of over 4,000 directors, assistant directors, teachers, and assistant teachers working in community-based ECE centers, Head Start centers, and public-school-based ECE classrooms statewide. Key findings of the study include:

1. Greater investment in scholarship and loan forgiveness programs for ECE professionals is necessary to create more diversified educational pathways for early educators and seamless transfers between two- and four-year programs and accessible programming for working adults.
2. Substantial investments in workforce development efforts are necessary to develop a pipeline of new ECE professionals entering the field.
3. Greater investment in evidence-based programs is needed to support ECE professionals who care for children with challenging behaviors. Children's behavioral issues are a significant source of job frustration for many early educators, contributing to early exit of professionals from the field.
4. Development of a pipeline is necessary to provide well-qualified and effective program leaders who will create positive working conditions and climates to support their ECE professionals and avoid occupational burnout and depression.

Several approaches have been successful in supporting recruitment and retention of early childhood educators in Colorado. These strategies include:

- T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood, which is operated in Colorado by Qualistar, a nonprofit organization that provides training, assessment, grants, scholarships, and technical assistance to ECE providers;
- Scholarships to cover students' coursework leading to a certification or an ECE degree;
- Funding to support required coursework for early childhood teachers and directors;
- Investments in evidence-based programs to support ECE professionals who care for children with challenging behaviors; and
- Statewide investment in community college scholarship and ECE programs that incorporate a matching element that requires colleges to raise additional money. The Colorado Community College Foundation with the Early Learning Challenge Fund Scholarship and Incentive program used a model that led to more dollars being raised, increased fundraising capacity, and greater awareness of the needs of the program.

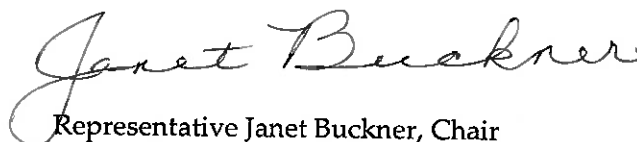
The support provided through these types of programs includes funding for college tuition and fees, paid time off to attend classes, and compensation increases upon successful completion of ECE coursework.

For the 2018-19 state fiscal year, the General Assembly approved an appropriation of \$500,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services for assistance for early childhood education advancement. Currently, the Department is soliciting proposals for using the funding appropriated last year. The proposals must focus on scholarships for educators as well as the development of five online courses to support educators' learning regarding children's social and emotional development and challenging behaviors.

We respectfully request that the General Assembly, for the 2019-20 state fiscal year, continue this line item, appropriating at least the amount appropriated last year and, to the extent possible, increasing the amount to help ensure a well-qualified, effective ECE professional workforce for the care and development of the state's children.

We appreciate the Joint Budget Committee's consideration of this request and your continuing commitment to prioritizing funding to help ensure positive outcomes for the state's youngest citizens. We welcome any questions you may have and the opportunity to discuss this request in more detail.

Sincerely,



Representative Janet Buckner, Chair  
Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative  
Commission