

# Early Childhood: Areas of Opportunity

While Colorado has experienced tremendous progress in the early childhood sector, there are still challenges that must be addressed at the local and state level. The ECLC encourages efforts to support and enhance the following Areas of Opportunity:

## ● IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE & EDUCATION FOR ALL FAMILIES

**63%**

of Colorado children under age 5 live in homes in which all available caregivers work

High quality early care and education environments provide a stable place for children to grow and thrive, allowing them to build the strong foundation of cognitive and social-emotional skills they need to be prepared to succeed in school and develop life-long positive outcomes. Unfortunately, the availability of high quality services is severely lacking and poses a significant expense to families. Additional investments are needed to deliver services through a combination of programs, providers and settings, including licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, informal family/friend/neighbor care and other community-based organizations. This mixed delivery system provides early childhood care and education options that ensure wherever children are cared for, they are in high quality, supportive environments. Particular attention should be paid to infant and toddler care, which is significantly more difficult for families to access and afford.

## ● ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE TO ENSURE COORDINATED CAREER PATHWAYS AND APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION

Early childhood educators provide the critical foundation for children in out-of-home care to develop the literacy and social-emotional skills they need to succeed in school. The early care and education sector is a cornerstone of local and state economic health, enabling parents to work and provide for their families while employing a large workforce of educators. However, as professional development opportunities and expectations for these educators have increased, compensation lags behind most other industries, and communities throughout Colorado are facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining a stable early childhood workforce. Ensuring that Colorado has a qualified, consistent and diverse early childhood workforce is critical to supporting the healthy development of children and maintaining a thriving economy.

**46%**

of the early childhood workforce receive public subsidies due to low wages

## ● SUPPORT IMPROVED FAMILY HEALTH & ECONOMIC SECURITY THROUGH A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH

Children living in **POVERTY** are more likely to start **SCHOOL** at a disadvantage, have poor **HEALTH**, and have lower **INCOME** as adults

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. Ensuring that parents have the health and economic supports they need to provide a nurturing home environment and meet their children's basic needs is essential for a child's healthy development. Children who are cared for in stable environments with access to health services, nutritious foods, safe water, stable housing and high quality learning environments are better able to develop the skills they need to succeed in school and thrive in their communities. Unfortunately, many children are living in environments without these basic supports, which research suggests can lead to poor mental and physical health, less success at school and work, and lower socioeconomic status in adulthood. Colorado should continue to support family health and economic security through state and local programs and ensure that interventions provide opportunities for both children and caregivers.

The ECLC expressly acknowledges the importance of supporting equitable outcomes for all of Colorado's residents and encourages thoughtful inclusion of supports and services for diverse communities.

# Early Childhood in Colorado

## A Shared Commitment To Children and Families: 2018 and Beyond

### STATEWIDE COMMITMENT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

Colorado has a long history of working together to ensure children and families grow and thrive. Our state has made admirable advances across the three domains of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*: Health & Well-Being, Family Support & Education and Learning & Development. Families, professionals, advocates and policy makers have worked together to build coordinated systems that support local areas to be responsive to the needs of their communities. The collaboration between state and local entities across private and public domains is a testament to Colorado's long and unwavering commitment to supporting children and families. However, there is much more work to be done to ensure all children and families have the supports they need to reach our shared vision: **all children are valued, healthy and thriving.**

### WHY FOCUSING ON EARLY CHILDHOOD IS IMPORTANT

Children's healthy development depends on the nurturing and supportive relationships they have with the parents and caregivers in their lives. When children are provided safe, healthy and learning-rich environments, the returns to society are abundant and communities thrive. Investing in high quality programs builds a developmental foundation which leads to a 13% financial return through long-term positive outcomes in education, health, economic productivity and reduced crime. These investments also provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to enhance their own educational and career opportunities to become self-sufficient and provide for their families. Investments in early childhood are one of the most effective strategies in achieving significant social and economic outcomes.

### THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP COMMISSION

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) is Colorado's statutorily-recognized state advisory council for early childhood. Our role is to be a statewide leader, subject matter expert and champion of best and promising practices throughout the state.

The ECLC is comprised of 20 individuals representing parents, business, five state departments, school districts, local municipalities, foundations, nonprofits and other important early childhood stakeholders. We serve as the trusted and proactive early childhood champion for high quality, outcome-focused learning and development, health and well-being, and family support and education for pregnant women, and children birth through age eight and their families.

The ECLC:

- Develops strategies to monitor and align efforts that increase the access, quality and equity of services through the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*;
- Assists in the development of public-private partnerships to coordinate and enhance services and supports; and
- Champions the use of relevant data and makes recommendations to the Governor's Office, the General Assembly and state agencies.

### OUR COMMITMENT

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission is committed to working with the incoming Governor, the Colorado General Assembly, state agencies and stakeholders to address the early childhood challenges Colorado faces to ensure that all children are valued, healthy and thriving.





### **Co-Chairs:**

- Anna Jo Haynes, CEO/President Emeritus - Mile High Early Learning Centers
- Elsa Holguín, Senior Program Officer - Rose Community Foundation
- Lt. Governor Donna Lynne, Department of Higher Education

### **Commissioners:**

- Letty Bass, Executive Director - Merle Chambers Fund
- Charlotte Brantley, President/CEO - Clayton Early Learning
- Douglas H. Clements, Executive Director - Marsico Institute for Early Learning and Literacy, University of Denver
- Melissa Colman, Associate Commissioner, Student Learning - Colorado Department of Education
- Heather Craiglow, Head Start Collaboration Director - Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Department of Human Services
- Barbara Grogan, Retired Founder and CEO - Western Industrial Contractors
- Gerri Gomez Howard, Principal - Gomez Howard Group
- Jeff Kuhr, Executive Director - Mesa County Health Department
- Tom Massey, Deputy Executive Director - Department of Health Care Policy & Financing
- Jeanne McQueeney, Commissioner - Eagle County
- Jerene Petersen, Deputy Executive Director of Community Partnerships - Colorado Department of Human Services
- Lydia Prado, Director of Community Partnerships - Barton Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise
- Cindy Schulz, Executive Director - Cydney and Tom Marsico Family Foundation
- Jai Scott, Parent Representative
- Susan Steele, Executive Director - Buell Foundation
- Erin Ulric, Prevention Services Division Deputy Director - Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- George Welsh, Superintendent - Cañon City Schools

### **Ex-Officio Members (non-voting):**

- Mary Anne Snyder, Director - Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Department of Human Services



SMART Act Hearing  
December 11, 2018

## WHO WE ARE

- Colorado's **STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL** on Early Childhood
- Created in 2010; **REAUTHORIZED** by HB17-1106 until 2023



§ 26-6.2-103. Early childhood leadership commission - created - mission

(1) There is created in the state department the early childhood leadership commission. The purpose of the commission is to ensure and advance a **comprehensive service delivery system for pregnant women and children from birth to eight years of age** using data to improve decision-making, alignment, and coordination among federally funded and state-funded services and programs for pregnant women and young children and their families.

At a minimum, the comprehensive service delivery system for pregnant women and children must include services in the areas of **prenatal health, child health, child mental health, early learning, and family support and parent education.**



PARENTS

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

PROVIDERS

PUBLIC HEALTH

FOUNDATIONS

HEALTH

HEAD START

BUSINESS

WHO WE ARE

20 Members  
including  
**5 STATE  
AGENCIES**

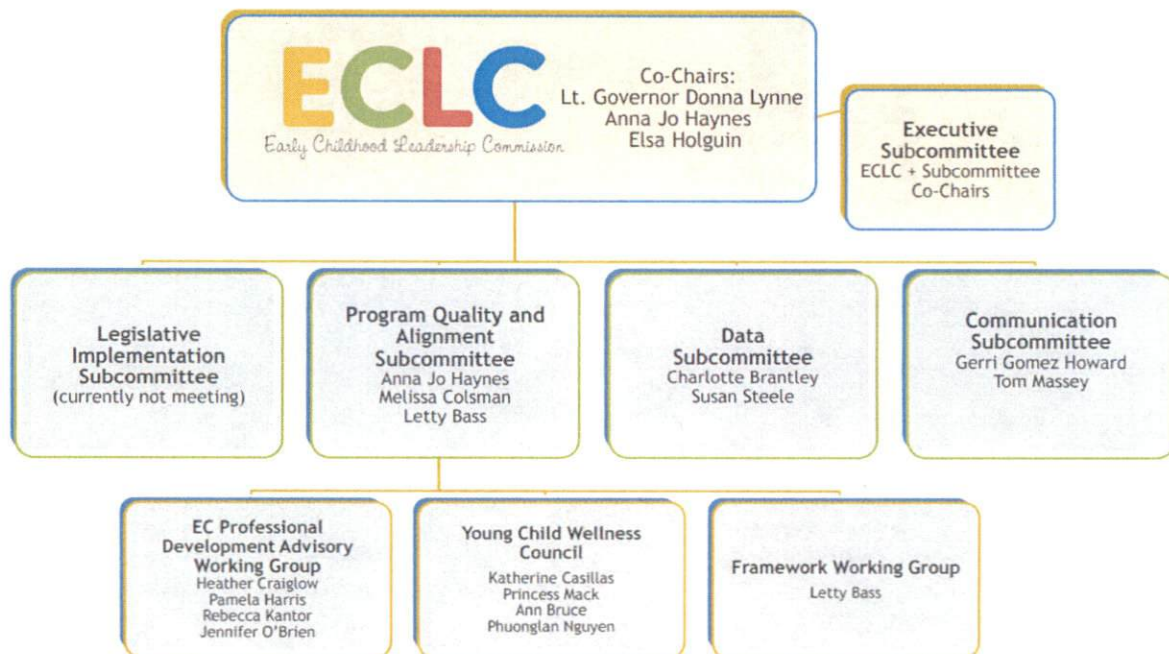


## WHO WE ARE

- Statutory Duties Include:
  - Advise and make **RECOMMENDATIONS**
  - Assist public and private entities with **ALIGNMENT**
  - Monitor strategies to increase **ACCESS, QUALITY** and **EQUITY** of early childhood services and supports



## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

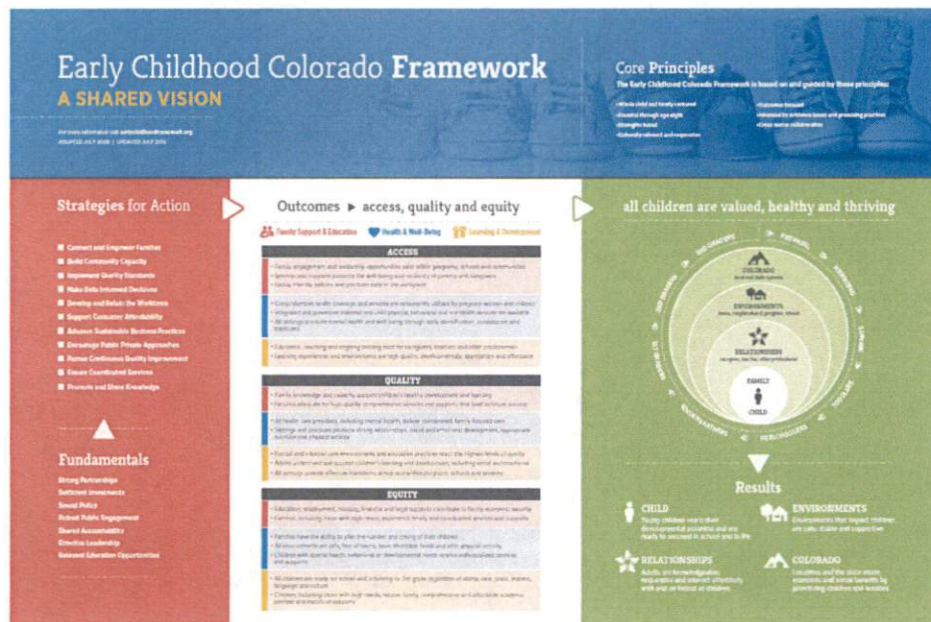


# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Worked with the Colorado Workforce Development Council on the *Education Sector Partnership*
- Advised the Office of Early Childhood
- Partnered with 100+ Organizations
- Consulted with the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission
- Launched the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework Website*



## Early Childhood Colorado Framework – Phase II



# Areas of Opportunity

**Early Childhood: Areas of Opportunity**

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- IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE & EDUCATION FOR ALL FAMILIES**

**63%** of Colorado children under age 5 are in early care and education.

High quality early care and education arrangements provide a stable place to observe, to grow and learn, allowing them to build the strong foundation of cognitive and motor skills that they need to be prepared to succeed in school and during the long productive life span. Unfortunately, the availability of high quality services is severely lacking and poses a significant barrier to families. Additional investments are needed to deliver services through a combination of programs, providers and settings, including licensed family and center based child care programs, public schools, licensed family-based care and other community based organizations. The mixed delivery system provides early childhood care and education options that ensure whatever children are cared for, they are in high quality, supportive environments. Particular attention should be paid to infant and toddler care, which is significantly more difficult for families to access and afford.
- ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE TO ENSURE COORDINATED CARES PATHWAYS AND APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION**

Early childhood educators provide the critical foundation for children to get off to a good start in life. The state and local workforce skills they need to succeed in school, the early care and education sector is a combination of local and state economic health, enabling parents to work and provide for their families while ensuring a high standard of education. However, as professional development opportunities and expectations for these educators have increased, compensation has lagged behind other industries and communities are facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining a stable early childhood workforce. Ensuring the Colorado has a qualified workforce and a viable early childhood workforce is critical to supporting the healthy development of children and maintaining a thriving economy.

**46%** of the early childhood workforce are women and women with the highest
- SUPPORT IMPROVED FAMILY HEALTH & ECONOMIC SECURITY THROUGH A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH**

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. Ensuring that parents have the health and economic supports they need to provide a nurturing home environment and meet their children's basic needs is essential for a child's healthy development. Children who are cared for in stable environments with access to health services, nutritional needs, safe water, stable housing and high quality learning environments are better able to flourish. The skills they need to succeed in school and thrive in the marketplace. Unfortunately, many children are living in circumstances without these basic supports, which research suggests can lead to poor mental and physical health, less success at school and work, and lower socioeconomic status in adulthood. Colorado should continue to support family health and economic security through state and local programs and ensure that interventions provide opportunities for both children and caregivers.

The ECC gratefully acknowledges the importance of supporting equitable outcomes for all of Colorado's residents and encourages thoughtful inclusion of supports and services for diverse communities.

- Improve Access to High Quality Early Care & Education for All Families
- Elevate the Early Childhood Workforce
- Support improved Family Health & Economic Security

Across all of the Areas: Promote Equitable Outcomes



# THANK YOU!



Early Childhood Leadership Commission

For more information:  
[www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org](http://www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org)

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