



Early Childhood & School Readiness  
Legislative Commission  
July 7, 2022

# WHO WE ARE

- Colorado's **STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL** on Early Childhood
- Created in 2010; **REAUTHORIZED** by HB22-1295 until 2025

## § 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

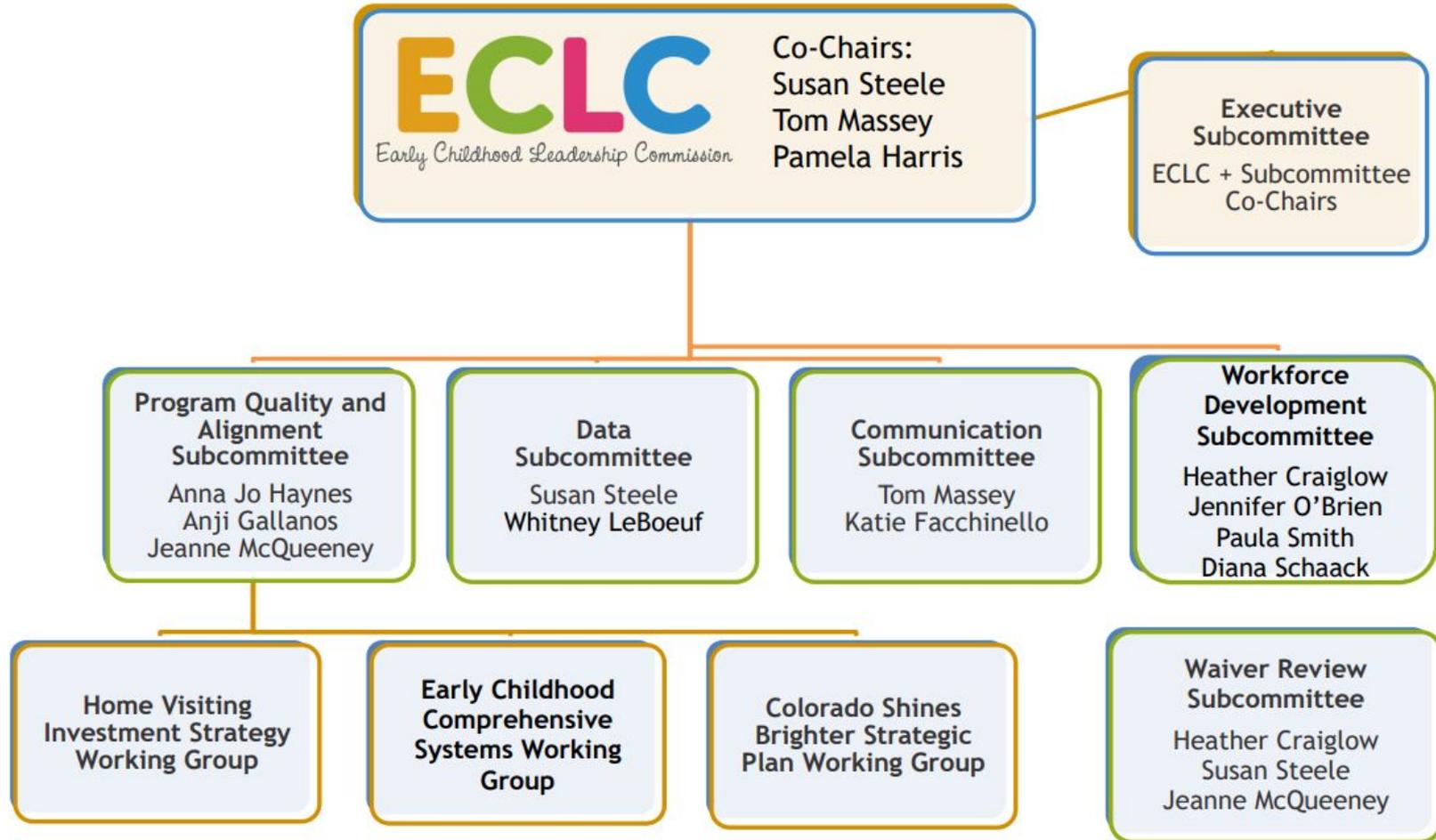
WHO WE ARE

21 Members  
including  
6 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 & Priorities

# Early Childhood Colorado Framework

## Early Childhood Colorado Framework A SHARED VISION

For more information visit [earlychildhoodframework.org](http://earlychildhoodframework.org)  
ADOPTED JULY 2008 | UPDATED JULY 2015

### Core Principles

The Early Childhood Colorado Framework is based on and guided by these principles:

- Whole child and family centered
- Prenatal through age eight
- Strengths based
- Culturally relevant and responsive
- Outcomes focused
- Informed by evidence based and promising practices
- Cross-sector collaboration

### Strategies for Action

- Connect and Empower Families
- Build Community Capacity
- Implement Quality Standards
- Make Data Informed Decisions
- Develop and Retain the Workforce
- Support Consumer Affordability
- Advance Sustainable Business Practices
- Encourage Public Private Approaches
- Pursue Continuous Quality Improvement
- Ensure Coordinated Services
- Promote and Share Knowledge

### Fundamentals

- Strong Partnerships
- Sufficient Investments
- Sound Policy
- Robust Public Engagement
- Shared Accountability
- Effective Leadership
- Relevant Education Opportunities

### Outcomes ► access, quality and equity

- Family Support & Education
- Health & Well-Being
- Learning & Development

| ACCESS  |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family engagement and leadership opportunities exist within programs, schools and communities</li> <li>Services and supports promote the well-being and resiliency of parents and caregivers</li> <li>Family friendly policies and practices exist in the workplace</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive health coverage and services are consistently utilized by pregnant women and children</li> <li>Integrated and preventive maternal and child physical, behavioral and oral health services are available</li> <li>All settings promote mental health and well-being through early identification, consultation and treatment</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education, coaching and ongoing training exist for caregivers, teachers and other professionals</li> <li>Learning experiences and environments are high quality, developmentally appropriate and affordable</li> </ul>   |
| QUALITY   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family knowledge and capacity support children's healthy development and learning</li> <li>Families advocate for high quality comprehensive services and supports that lead to future success</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All health care providers, including mental health, deliver coordinated, family focused care</li> <li>Settings and practices promote strong relationships, social and emotional development, appropriate nutrition and physical activity</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal and informal care environments and education practices reach the highest levels of quality</li> <li>Adults understand and support children's learning and development, including social and emotional</li> <li>All settings provide effective transitions across and within programs, schools and systems</li> </ul>                          |
| EQUITY  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education, employment, housing, financial and legal supports contribute to family economic security</li> <li>Families, including those with high needs, experience timely and coordinated services and supports</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families have the ability to plan the number and timing of their children</li> <li>All environments are safe, free of toxins, have affordable foods and offer physical activity</li> <li>Children with special health, behavioral or developmental needs receive individualized services and supports</li> </ul>                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children are ready for school and achieving by 3rd grade regardless of ability, race, place, income, language and culture</li> <li>Children, including those with high needs, receive timely, comprehensive and affordable academic services and transition supports</li> </ul>  |

### all children are valued, healthy and thriving



### Results

- CHILD**  
Young children reach their developmental potential and are ready to succeed in school and in life
- ENVIRONMENTS**  
Environments that impact children are safe, stable and supportive
- RELATIONSHIPS**  
Adults are knowledgeable, responsive and interact effectively with and on behalf of children
- COLORADO**  
Localities and the state attain economic and social benefits by prioritizing children and families

[www.EarlyChildhoodFramework.org](http://www.EarlyChildhoodFramework.org)

# Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Statement



“For many children in our state, their experience is inequitable from birth. This is evidenced by numerous indicators that show that children of color consistently face barriers that lead to lower educational attainment, poorer health outcomes, and other lifelong challenges. The importance of early care and education in challenging and breaking through these systemic inequities cannot be overstated.”

# Universal Preschool Policy Discussion Guide



## Universal Preschool Policy Discussion Guide

### Critical "Must Haves" in Colorado's Universal Preschool Policy

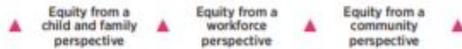
The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) embraces the following as essential components when reviewing, considering, and recommending policies related to universal preschool:

- ❑ **Equity drives decisions and priorities:** CO recognizes that equity does not mean equality (the same answer, size, approach in every instance), rather it allows flexibility based on the context to best meet needs.
- ❑ **Universal and targeted:** CO designs universal preschool to serve ALL children while providing for additional resources and supports for those furthest from opportunity.
- ❑ **High quality standards:** CO sets culturally responsive, comprehensive, high quality standards across all aspects of a program AND provides pathways and supports to achieve them.
- ❑ **Child and family centric services:** CO designs programs and systems based on family voice and needs, while continuously engaging families to improve child and family experience, health, and wellbeing.
- ❑ **Child and program outcomes:** CO demonstrates outcomes and impact with the necessary tracking and reporting systems to ensure accountability.
- ❑ **Access:** CO expands and increases options for family choice, including settings in licensed community-based centers, family child care homes, and school settings.
- ❑ **Diverse workforce:** CO supports and champions a diverse workforce by prioritizing standards that promote equitable opportunities for preparation and compensation, professional development, and educational and training pathways for early childhood professionals in all settings.
- ❑ **Mixed delivery system:** CO invests in building capacity of communities, programs, and workforce to ensure licensed community-based centers, family child care homes, and school settings provide quality programming.
- ❑ **Streamlined administrative burden:** CO creates efficiencies in administrative and eligibility functions at family, program, and community levels to reinvest in services and workforce.
- ❑ **Strengthened and expanded resources:** CO creates policies and allocates funding in a way that strengthens the broader early childhood system, including birth to 3 services.

### Colorado's Early Childhood Leadership Commission - Stewards of Equity

The Early Childhood Colorado Framework is founded upon the pillars of access, quality, and equity in serving all children and families in our state. These guiding principles speak to the commitment of the early childhood community to declare unequivocally that racism has no place in our communities.

The ECLC is charged with playing a key role in identifying, evaluating, and recommending policy alternatives aligned with key preschool design and implementation questions arising from the Future of Preschool Policy Development process. The ECLC believes that Colorado's universal preschool program will be successful when, and only when, policies and practices are in the pursuit of equity:



### What is Equity-mindedness in Policy?

For many children in our state, their experience is inequitable from birth. This is evidenced by numerous indicators that show that children of color consistently face barriers that lead to lower educational attainment, poorer health outcomes, and other lifelong challenges. The importance of early care and education in challenging and breaking through these systemic inequities cannot be overstated. Three-month-old babies can visually categorize faces by race. Toddlers begin to connect racial features to a person's behavior. Preschoolers can identify and act out against racial injustice on their own. Children's experiences in their formative years have the power to change our world.

We express our sincere gratitude to all who have dedicated their work and lives to fighting for access, quality, and equity within communities. We stand with you and know that we have much more work to do together.

ECLC Statement on Equity, August 2020

*"Equity is not 'nice to have.' It's a 'got to have.' Unless we focus on African American and Latino students, our country will not get to where it needs to be."* - James R. Merisotis, President and CEO, Lumina Foundation

An equity focus in policy recognizes the need to eliminate disparities in outcomes of children and families from underserved and underrepresented populations.

It is deliberately color-conscious and seeks to prevent or eliminate gaps for Native Americans, African American, Latinx, refugee, and other marginalized children and families.

It prioritizes institutional or program accountability rather than child or family challenges/gaps/deficits and monitors the impacts of specific groups to see when policies and practices are creating or worsening inequality.

Applying an equity-minded focus requires policymakers to consider who benefits, who loses, and how children and families in greatest need fare as a result of the policy.

An equity-minded lens can also help identify equity "assets," or policies that may already be in place that advance equity.

Protocol for Assessing Equity-Mindedness in State Policy, Center for Urban Education, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, January 2017

• Critical “must-have” components in a universal preschool program

• Equity-mindedness in policy making

• Key Questions for consideration



# Colorado Department of Early Childhood

# TRANSITION PLANNING

HB21-1304 called for the creation of two reports:



Department of Early Childhood  
Transition Plan

Unanimously approved by the ECLC  
in November 2021



Colorado Universal Preschool  
Recommendations

Unanimously approved by the ECLC  
in January 2022

# TRANSITION PLANNING

## HB22-1197

- Signed into law March 1, 2022
- Moved the official launch date of the Department of Early Childhood to March 1, 2022 to allow for the hiring of key leadership positions including the Executive Director

## HB22-1295

- Signed into law April 25, 2022
- Established the responsibilities of the Department of Early Childhood and the Executive Director
- Moved early childhood programs from the Departments of Human Services and Education to the Department of Early Childhood
- Created the Colorado Universal Preschool Program
- Made appropriations

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES



# RULES ADVISORY COUNCIL

- 15 appointed members serving four-year terms
- Representing providers, counties, businesses and organizations, experts in federal early childhood regulations, higher ed, early childhood health or mental health
  - Majority must be parents, early childhood workforce, and members of underserved communities including rural areas of the state
- Will advise the Executive Director on developing rules to guide the programs and services that the new department will oversee
- Advice given by the RAC should be in the interest of all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals, centering on equitable distribution of resources and programming
- Appointments announced July 2022

# ECLC FUTURE PRIORITIES

The ECLC will remain a crucial advisory body to the Governor and state departments including the Department of Early Childhood.

HB22-1295 charges the ECLC with several specific tasks including recruiting nominees for the Rules Advisory Council, monitoring the progress and success of the Department of Early Childhood, informing the distribution of funding for the universal preschool program, supporting a diverse and high-quality early childhood workforce, providing advice and guidance to the Executive Director, and more.

# THANK YOU!



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

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