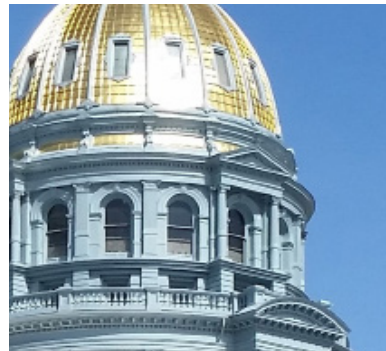


2022

Report to the Colorado General Assembly



Early Childhood and School Readiness



Prepared by Legislative Council Staff

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January 2023

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December 2022

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December 2022

To Members of the Seventy-third 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.

The committee did not recommend any legislation to the Legislative Council for consideration during the 2023 legislative session.

Sincerely,

/s/ Representative Alec Garnett
Chair

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This report is also available online at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/earlychildhoodandschoolreadinesslegislativecommission/2022-regular-session>

Committee Charge

Pursuant to state law (Section 26-6.5-203, C.R.S.), the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission (ECSRLC) may meet up to four times per year to study issues concerning early childhood and school readiness. Additional meetings may be added as needed through legislation. 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 policy concerning early childhood and school readiness.

Committee Activities

The committee held two meetings during the 2022 interim. Briefings and presentations were made by state departments, early childhood professionals, members of the nonprofit and advocacy communities, and members of the public on a wide range of subjects, including:

- Colorado Department of Early Childhood transition;
- early child care workforce development; and
- children and family health and wellness.

The following sections discuss the commission's activities during the 2022 interim.

Department of Early Childhood Transition Updates

The commission heard from representatives from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) about establishing the new department and the process of transitioning programs from one agency to another. Presenters from the CDEC spoke about the department's mission, vision, and values, several projects and initiatives CDEC is pursuing, local coordinating organization selection, the status of the single application process for early childhood services, and the Rules Advisory Committee member selection process.

Representatives from the other agencies spoke about their role in transitioning planning, interagency agreements and Memorandums of Understanding with the new department in regards to partnerships, cross-department collaboration, how to align existing programs with new programs, and future priorities. CDE provided an update on the Colorado Preschool Program, the department's role in planning for Universal Pre-K (UPK), and kindergarten school readiness data.

Early Child Care Workforce Development

The commission heard from representatives from the CDEC, DHE, Early Milestones Colorado, and apprenticeship program coordinators from institutions of higher education about workforce development for early child care workers. CDEC representatives gave an overview of the early childhood workforce, including data on unfilled positions and recruitment and retention actions, as well as goals for future capacity building. The early childhood educator apprenticeship program coordinators discussed their respective programs and their impact on growing the early child care workforce. DHE and Early Milestones Colorado representatives discussed workforce development grants and strategies to engage and support the early childhood workforce, such as coaching and training, family child care home coordination and support, and targeted recruitment. Finally, CDEC representatives told the commission members about early childhood educator funding opportunities; recruitment and retention of ECE workforce, legislative priorities, early childhood stimulus funding, strategic planning, and implementation plans for universal pre-k.

Children and Family Health and Well-being

Representatives from the Colorado Children’s Campaign and Early Milestones Colorado presented to the committee on various factors impacting children and family’s mental health, such as economic insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic. Representatives from Healthy Child Care Colorado, the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, and CDEC discussed their organization’s programs aimed at providing support for children and family mental health and general well-being. These programs include the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultation Program and Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) services and providers. The presenters discussed the ECMH and CCHC workforce and recommendations for improvement, as well as legislative priorities for the upcoming session.

Summary of Recommendations

As a result of the commission's activities, the commission did not recommend any bills to the Legislative Council for consideration in the 2023 session.

Resource Materials

Meeting summaries are prepared for each meeting of the committee and contain all handouts provided to the committee. 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 committee 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

July 7, 2022

- ◆ Transition update from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC).
- ◆ Presentation by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission on its mission, statutory duties, and transition planning for the CDEC.
- ◆ Updates on the CDEC transition from other state departments and agencies, including the Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and Financing, Colorado Department of Education, and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

July 26, 2022

- ◆ Workforce-related legislative updates from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood.
- ◆ Panel presentation on apprenticeships.
- ◆ Presentation by Early Milestones Colorado on Community Innovation and Resilience for Care and Learning Equity Grants.
- ◆ Update from the Colorado Department of Higher Education on the early childhood educator workforce.
- ◆ Panel presentation on the impacts of family indicators and economic challenges on children's mental and physical health.
- ◆ Panel presentation on supporting the general health and wellness of children and families.