



To the Members of the House State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs Committee:

My name is Christina Walker and I am the director of policy and advocacy at Clayton Early Learning. Clayton supports a whole child, whole family approach to the earliest years. We directly serve approximately 500 children, birth to Kindergarten entry, and their families across the state of Colorado. We believe that healthy early childhood development offers one of the most powerful levers for ending inequality and creating thriving communities. I would like to express our support for Senate Bill 199.

Currently, tens of thousands of Colorado residents who cannot verify legal presence or who live in a mixed-status family are unable to fully participate in our economy due to anti-immigrant legislation passed in previous years. Colorado's laws create additional obstacles and go far and above existing federal law, barring individuals from utilizing basic benefits that would support their families and impeding their right to earn livable wages that contribute to our state economy. Additionally, the laws have created a patchwork of state and local policies that create confusion and disparities around key resources and information that constantly threaten undocumented families' ability to lead stable lives. It is also important to note that the majority of [undocumented families pay taxes](#), hereby contributing to the same programs that they are not eligible to access. [Children of immigrants are also overwhelmingly U.S. citizens](#). In Colorado, [nearly one in four children](#) lived in an immigrant family as of 2018. More than ninety percent of these children were themselves citizens; however, 47 percent of these children lived with parents who were undocumented.

As an early childhood provider serving Early Head Start and Head Start-eligible families, the passage of SB21-199 has severe implications for the families we serve. At Clayton, more than one-third of the children we serve are dual language learners. We do not require, nor do we document, the immigration status of the children or families receiving Head Start or Early Head Start services. We believe the experiences, development, and education of children of immigrants are consequential for our entire country and the state of Colorado. If we do not remove these barriers, we will continue to harm the ability of Colorado businesses to thrive and to lead healthy lives and engage in meaningful work to support their families. We can create a Colorado where every resident can prosper.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 199. I appreciate your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Best,

Christina Walker  
Director, Policy & Advocacy  
Clayton Early Learning  
[cwalker@claytonearlylearning.org](mailto:cwalker@claytonearlylearning.org)



To: House State, Civic, Military & Veterans Affairs Committee  
From: Khatira Amn, Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning  
Date: May 27, 2021  
Re: Support for SB21-199

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Khatira Amn and I work with Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning as an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Policy Advocate, helping to create opportunities for dual language learner families in accessing early childhood education. Spring Institute is a nationally-recognized provider of effective intercultural learning programs and services with a mission of empowering people and organizations to succeed across languages and cultures.

I'm a refugee and mom of three. I represent immigrant / refugee families both professionally and personally. I left behind my livelihood and successful legal career when my family fled our home country for our safety. We are contributing to the American economy. Yet, like many other families, we're still struggling to make ends meet regardless of the support we get from the state and federal government. It makes me feel extremely worried and sad when I think about tens of thousands of Colorado residents---our neighbors in this beautiful state---who cannot verify legal presence or are unable to access critical services.

Research shows that undocumented immigrants increase the size of the U.S economy, contribute to economic growth, enhance the welfare of native-born community members, contribute more in tax revenue than they collect, and work in the occupations that are critical to our nation. In Colorado,, there are over 32,000 immigrant business owners who employ over 100,000 residents. They are helping our communities thrive.

Existing state statute harms our local communities by creating artificial barriers to who can and cannot fully participate in our economy and preventing local communities from meeting their unique needs, causing the slowing down of our economic recovery. The anti-immigrant legislation passed in 2006 goes beyond the existing federal law and harms all members of our communities by



driving down wages and threatening public health by barring individuals from utilizing basic benefits and impeding their right to make an adequate living. Additionally, the 2006 laws have created a patchwork of state and local policies that generate confusion and disparities around key resources and information. This constantly threatens undocumented families' ability to lead stable lives, causing undue suffering for hardworking parents and their children who are part of the future of our state..

By supporting these vital policy changes, we can help to eliminate the administratively costly and inefficient requirement that state and local governments verify legal presence when determining eligibility for public benefits, including professional and commercial licenses, and the awarding of grants, loans, and contracts.

Thank you for your consideration and please vote YES on SB21-199

## **CIRC Testimony in Support of SB21-199**

We are testifying in support of bill SB21-199 which would expand all professional licenses to all immigrants in Colorado by removing the previous requirement asking individuals to provide lawful presence verification and clarify legal ambiguity for local jurisdictions to open up access to public benefits by repealing HB1023.

The Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC) is a statewide, membership-based coalition of immigrant, faith, labor, youth, community, business, and ally organizations founded in 2002 to improve the lives of immigrants and refugees by making Colorado a more welcoming, immigrant-friendly state.

CIRC believes firmly that removing this barrier to professional licensing and public benefits will allow more individuals to access better economic opportunities and advance racial equity in our state. This pandemic has highlighted how deeply our state relies on immigrants who have served on the frontlines as essential workers throughout this health and economic crisis. This past year has also been extremely trying for immigrants and mixed status families who have faced barrier after barrier to accessing the economic support and other critical resources needed to provide for themselves and their families during an unprecedented crisis. Despite their countless contributions to our state, immigrants have not yet been given the same respect and access they need and deserve.

It is time for Colorado to take the next step towards justice and equitable access by removing the barriers to professional licenses and public benefits that have kept immigrants and their families from having equal access to wealth building and opportunities to thrive in our state.

**Immigrants are an integral part of our state and deserve access to the same opportunities as every Coloradan.** We urge a YES vote in favor of SB21-199.

Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition  
80209

Representative Chris Kennedy

House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs

Gabriel Duenez

CSU Pueblo Nursing Student

Pueblo, Colorado

Thursday, May 27, 2021

In Support of SB21-199: Remove Barriers To Certain Public Opportunities:

Thank you Mister Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is Gabriel Duenez and I live in Pueblo, Colorado. I am a 22 year old student at CSU Pueblo majoring in Nursing and Spanish and am a member of Center for Health Progress. I am here in support of SB21-199, Removing Barriers bill.

My dad came to Colorado for more opportunities for our family, and he found good work and safety for us. My mom and I came when I was three and we stayed so our family could be together and have a better life. I was in middle school when I learned I was in a different social position than my other friends at school. They were traveling, and I asked my mom why we couldn't travel and she explained to me it was because of our status, and I began to understand what this meant for my own future, my education, and my career. When I was in high school, a program called Health Academy gave me the chance to learn more about the medical community and get involved. Making a difference in the lives of others and for my community left a big impact on me. I quickly learned how important being involved is to me, and how big of an impact I can have on the lives of others by working in health care.

When I was a volunteer at Innovage through the Health Academy, I saw firsthand how important nurses are in the lives of their patients, and how much the patients love their nurses and Certified Nursing Assistants. You see and hear them talk about how these individuals made their day, and make their week. The nurses increase their quality of life, and that is when I learned that this is what I want to do. I want to be a good nurse that helps people. Even just documenting their vitals, you can put your patient in a good mood and make a difference. I learned this is what I love to do, I told myself this is what I want to do, and if this bill passes I can.

I have DACA, and I'm going to graduate from college in two years. I was a sophomore in high school when I first applied for DACA. I had to go to Colorado Springs to get a lawyer, scheduled dates, pay \$495 and even more for a lawyer. This was almost \$1,000 total, so I could work, get a driver's license, and pay taxes. I have to do this every two years. Prove I'm paying taxes, pay that amount of money, and hope I can keep my DACA. It feels good to pay taxes and feel normal, like my other friends, but it is a grim reminder of where I am socially- in limbo. You have to live your life in two year segments and hope for the best. But this bill will help me know that even though I'll have to keep renewing my DACA, I will have the promise of being able to become a registered Nurse after finishing my college degree.

Without this bill, all that hard work would be for nothing. Meaningless education and lost money. Letting everyone get their license means the state will have a lot more people in their careers and paying more in taxes. This can help us tear down that stereotype that immigrants are a burden to the economy. I think that is a strong case to get rid of old harmful laws once and for all.

This bill is critical for the health care workforce in my local community and our state. I can work with patients who don't speak English fluently. I help them learn what medications they need to take and answer their questions in Spanish. When I and others speak their language, they can trust you more than someone who doesn't. This bill will help more aspiring nurses like me instill more trust with our community, and more people will get the healthcare they need because there will be more people like me to help.

Thank you for listening to my experience, and I ask you please vote in support of SB21-199, Removing Barriers bill.

Representative Chris Kennedy

House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs

Brenda Figueroa

Pueblo, CO

Thursday, May 27, 2021

In Support of SB21-199 Remove Barriers To Certain Public Opportunities:

Thank you Mister Chair and members of the committee. My name is Brenda Figueroa, I live in Pueblo, Colorado and I work as an advisor at East High School. I am also a member of Center for Health Progress, and am submitting testimony in support of SB21-199, Removing Barriers bill.

My mom cleans houses and my dad is a construction worker and they taught me early on how important it is to get a good education. I went to CSU Pueblo and got my Bachelor's in Social Work, so that I could help others. I wanted to use my experience as a first generation student to help others in a similar position succeed. I've had mentors who have helped me, and I am so passionate about education, that I worked and put myself through school to get a Master's degree in Higher Education. This is why it is important for me to be a role model for others and help them reach their dreams for higher education.

As an advisor, I work with students when they first start high school and continue working with them until they graduate. I am recruiting and working with students in the English as a Second Language program for college readiness classes and programs. Our program tries to recruit students to apply for college, but last year out of 300 students in our program, only one applied for college. When you talk to the students who lack the ability to verify lawful presence, it is clear that they know they will not be able to go to college because they can't afford it and do not qualify for any federal assistance or grant programs. They feel the heavy burden and bear the brunt of meeting closed doors, when their friends and peers are eligible for more support because they have the benefits of US citizenship. I have met so many parents who want to help their children succeed and go to college. They try to apply for financial assistance to help their children attend college, but they do not qualify because they are undocumented. This causes me pain because these kids are smart and have very bright futures. Passing this bill would help them realize their dreams and potential and show them that there is more for them in life.

While I have been able to achieve many of my dreams like getting multiple degrees and helping others, my husband's status has made it difficult for him to do the same. My husband came to the US when he was 9. When we got married, we wanted to buy a house but we could not because the applications required a social security number. My husband does not have a social security number, so we could not apply for a house together and could not afford it using only my income. He wants to start his own business but he can't because he can't access loans or other assistance that are available to others.

SB21-199 would make it possible for my husband and the students that I work with to achieve their goals, whether that is going to college or starting their own business. If passed, the bill would remove barriers that keep Coloradans without documentation from accessing professional and business licenses. This would mean more Coloradans can start businesses which will lead to economic growth. Immigrants are some of the primary drivers of new business growth in Colorado, and we need that now more than ever to ensure we have a chance at a strong and equitable economic recovery from COVID. The bill would also allow people to attend college and get licensed in their profession, which will increase wages for everyone, increase the local tax base and removes harmful barriers to all students and aspiring professionals from reaching their dreams.

Thank you for allowing me to share my experience. I ask you please vote in support of SB21-199, Removing Barriers bill.



# 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## COLORADO STATEWIDE PARENT COALITION

The Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition (CSPC) humbly submits this written testimony in favor of SB21-199: removing barriers to certain public opportunities.

CSPC's mission is to provide advocacy and training for parents, and childcare providers to be meaningfully engaged in the success of their children's education in order to close the opportunity gap and ensure successful future educational outcomes. One of our programs we operate in order to achieve this mission is train informal childcare provider to be early childhood educator. Many of these providers are Spanish speaking immigrants. Many of them would like to become licensed, however, are unable to become licensed because they cannot prove lawful presence. In addition to this, many of the families that these providers serve are mix status families and because of the policies that SB 199 is aiming to change, these families will no longer live in fear for applying for the benefits that they may qualify for, or the professional, occupational, or childcare licenses so that they can serve more families.

CSPC is also leading the Removing Barriers coalition which is the coalition that is backing SB199. This coalition is made up of over 200 organizations, agencies, businesses, non-profits, and community leaders. This coalition is backing SB199 because it have been 15 years that Colorado has been treating the immigrant community as the "other" instead of as a necessary, and essential part of our community.

I urge a YES vote on SB 199 today. Thank you,

Lorena Garcia - 80221

Executive Director

Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition

House State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs

05/27/2021 Upon Adjournment

SB21-032 Mobile Veterans-support Unit Grant Program

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Paul Melroy For Veterans Community Project</p>	<p>Veterans Community Project has a very simple mission: end veteran homelessness. From a practical standpoint, the organization is focused on helping any veteran in need, housed or unhoused.</p> <p>Veterans Community Project has been actively providing case management in Colorado for about the last year-and-a-half. Longmont is the first city in a large-scale national expansion for our organization and we are modeling ourselves on our very successful, original location in Kansas City. We discovered, however, a major difference in operating in northern Colorado versus operating in Kansas City --- transportation. In the northeast quadrant of Colorado it can be very difficult to get around using public transportation. While we have just opened a walk-in outreach center in Longmont, where any vet in need can come for help, not all vets in northern Colorado will be able to easily reach us. We realized early on that we would have to devote a considerable amount of effort to street outreach and mobile outreach. For the last 18 months those two areas have been almost all that we've been focused on outside of some construction planning for our Village of tiny homes.</p> <p>Providing social services to veterans is difficult to begin with. The vast majority of our clients have PTSD, although the way it manifests itself can be quite varied. They have trust issues, particularly when the system has failed them in the past. They have trouble relating to people who don't have a shared background or set of experiences. They sometimes camp in remote places that are really off the map. The work is time consuming, resource intensive and emotionally taxing for the case managers. But we do it because we believe that anyone who took the oath to defend our country and our constitution is deserving.</p> <p>Simply put, the bill being contemplated will provide resources to help the vets that are the hardest to serve and the least likely to receive the services that they need. Between 20% and 25% of the homeless population are veterans – an inordinate number. There are at least 2,000 homeless veterans in Colorado and a much greater number who are in need of</p>

	<p>services. We, and some other wonderful veteran-centric organizations here in Colorado, are scrambling to get to as many as we can but we know we are falling short. This bill would certainly help us collectively get to more of them. We think these veterans deserve more and we are hoping that you do, too.</p>
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House State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs

05/27/2021 Upon Adjournment

SB21-199 Remove Barriers To Certain Public Opportunities

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Peggy Leech For League of Women Voters of Colorado</p>	<p>Testimony in support of SB21-199 Removing Barriers to Certain Public Opportunities 5.27.21</p> <p>Dear Chair and Committee Members,</p> <p>My name is Peggy Leech, and I am representing the League of Women Voters of Colorado. The League is a nonpartisan organization, with membership in 19 local leagues that span the state.</p> <p>LWV is in support of SB-199.</p> <p>The League supports policies and programs designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase job opportunities</li><li>• Increase access to health insurance</li><li>• provide support services such as childcare and transportation</li><li>• provide opportunities and/or incentives for basic or remedial education and job training</li></ul> <p>SB-199 is designed to remove barriers to accomplishing those policies and programs for our immigrant community. That community is a vital part of Colorado's economy and our society, which has become even more apparent during the pandemic.</p> <p>Please support SB-199, Removing Barriers to Certain Public Opportunities.</p>

	<p>Thank you, Peggy Leech League of Women Voters of Colorado</p>
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