



COUNCIL FOR A  
**STRONG AMERICA**  
COLORADO

March 4, 2019

Colorado General Assembly  
200 E Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

Re: HB19-1194

Dear Members of the Colorado General Assembly,

We write as Colorado members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, an organization comprised of more than 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys, and survivors of violent crime from Colorado and across the country. As law enforcement leaders, we recognize that one of the best ways to fight crime is to make sure our children get off to the right start in life through quality early childhood education.

While it is essential that we keep our children, communities, and schools safe and free from violence, it is also critical that we ensure that children, particularly those who are still in preschool, are not needlessly suspended or expelled for behavioral infractions that can be addressed more productively through evidence-based interventions. As such, we support measures to reduce out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for children in preschool through second grade, when the health and safety of others is not in jeopardy.

We do not and will not accept violence in our schools, and recognize the importance of giving school administrators the authority to appropriately discipline their students. However, we also recognize that suspensions and expulsions can have serious and long-lasting implications for a child. Children who are in preschool are at an especially critical stage in their development. Suspending or expelling them fails to address the underlying cause of their behavior. Instead, the American Academy of Pediatrics cautions, when preschool students are expelled they internalize a negative sense of self that they carry with them into future interactions with schools and teachers.

Research shows that children who are suspended or expelled are several times more likely to experience disciplinary action later in their academic careers. They are also more likely to report feeling disconnected at school, and to either drop out or fail out of school later in life. According to one study, among children who were disciplined more than 10 times, 60 percent did not complete high school. Another study shows high school dropouts are eight times more likely than their peers to be incarcerated.

1400 S. Colorado Boulevard / Suite 460 / Denver, CO 80222

[StrongNation.org](http://StrongNation.org)

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Each year an estimated 7 out of every 1,000 preschool students are expelled from state-funded programs. That rate is over three times higher than expulsions for students in K-12. Preschool boys, and particularly those of color, are disproportionately likely to be expelled. Boys account for half of the overall preschool population, but make up 78 percent of preschool expulsions.

As law enforcement leaders, we recognize the importance of keeping our communities and schools safe. At the same time, we know that suspensions and expulsions result in the absence of learning during a child's critical development period. Employing alternative approaches to disciplinary problems for young children, including parent engagement, referrals to needed services and restorative practices, can result in better educational and life outcomes for students.

We urge you to support the passage of HB19-1194 to ensure that we are meeting the educational needs of our youngest students while protecting the health and safety of others.

Sincerely,

D.A. George Brauchler  
18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

Chief John Collins  
Englewood Police Department

/s/

Sheriff Lance Fitzgerald  
Ouray County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Jeffrey Miller  
Cheyenne County Sheriff's Office

Chief Keith Robinson  
Gunnison Police Department

Chief Paul Schultz  
Fort Morgan Police Department

Sheriff Jeff Shrader  
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Justin Smith  
Larimer County Sheriff's Office



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Sheriff Tony Spurlock  
Douglas County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Kirk Taylor  
Pueblo County Sheriff's Office

Colonel Mark Trostel  
Colorado State Patrol (Retired Chief)