



March 2024

To: House Health and Human Services Committee

Re: AAUW Support for CO HB1223--Improved Access to the Child Care Assistance Program

Dear Committee Members,

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. More than 700 community leaders are AAUW members in local branches around the state.

AAUW has led the fight for economic empowerment for women, and we have made progress over the years.. Yet women continue to face barriers to reach our full potential. One of these barriers is access to childcare.

Too many families are not able to access the complicated and cumbersome childcare assistance system, which means thousands of women are not able to work, or to work at their full potential. In turn, this impacts our families, our communities and our state's economy.

HB24-1223 will address this situation in several ways: It will overhaul the Colorado child care assistance program (CCCAP). By simplifying the application process, creating a universal application, and changing the income qualifications. The bill will also provide payments to child care providers. Based on enrollment, not actual attendance. With easier, more reliable access to child care, more women will have more options to achieve economic equity and provide security for their families.

For these reasons, AAUW of Colorado urges your YES vote in committee and as the bill moves through the legislative process.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden".

Su Ryden

AAUW Colorado Public Policy Co-Director

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American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.



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TO: Colorado House Health & Human Services Committee
FROM: Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)
RE: House Bill 24-1223, Improved Access to the Child Care Assistance Program
Hearing Date: March 12, 2024

Dear House Health & Human Services Committee Members,

On behalf of our members who are business executives from a range of industries and communities across Colorado, EPIC requests your support for HB 24-1223. This bill streamlines administration and improves payment methodologies for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). It will increase access to child care for families and improve financial stability for providers while proactively implementing new federal requirements for the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) which supports CCCAP.

According to the Council for a Strong America, Colorado parents, businesses, and taxpayers are losing \$2.7 billion annually due to the shortage of licensed infant and toddler care alone. The Colorado Chamber and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation have identified child care as a top priority, and many of the local Chambers echo this priority. This is because they know that working parents need reliable, affordable child care to go to work. We also know that there currently isn't enough licensed child care available to meet their needs, and the existing care is unaffordable to many families.

It is also incredibly difficult for child care providers to make the numbers work to keep their businesses running and serving their communities, with the cost to provide care far exceeding the amount that families can afford to pay. This leads providers to experience challenges covering expenses and maintaining cash flow, and many end up closing their doors, further exacerbating the child care crisis.

In addition, the Federal government recently released a series of rules for CCDF that will go into effect over the next few years. This legislation proactively implements many of the required changes.

As the business voice in support of early childhood in Colorado, EPIC believes that investments in our early childhood care and education system are critical to a strong economy and competitive business environment. The policies in HB 24-1223 will make significant progress toward supporting working families and stabilizing child care providers in Colorado.

We ask for your support of HB 24-1223, and we are willing and able to provide any information that would be helpful to you.

Respectfully,

Nicole Riehl
President and CEO
Executives Partnering to Invest in Children

Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Lex Loutzenhiser and I am a Policy Manager with Illuminate Colorado, a statewide nonprofit working to strengthen families, organizations, and communities to prevent child maltreatment. I am submitting written testimony **to ask you for a 'yes' vote on HB24-1223 Improved Access to Child Care Assistance.**

I want to highlight two main reasons Illuminate supports HB24-1223:

1. **The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) promotes protective factors that reduce instances of child maltreatment.** This bill promotes access to concrete supports in times of need, one of five research-informed protective factors for preventing child maltreatment¹. Increasing access to quality, affordable child care through CCAP, a concrete support in times of need, reduces instances of child abuse and neglect. Research shows that each additional month a low-income mother receives a child care subsidy results in a 16% decrease in the odds of a child neglect report and a 14% decrease in the odds of a physical abuse report in the following year.² By increasing access to CCAP through strategies, such as a universal application and limiting copayments to 7% of a family's income in alignment with federal rule, HB24-1223 promotes access to child care, preventing child maltreatment.
2. **Expanding CCAP to caregivers who are accessing substance use treatment increases access for families with increased risk of child maltreatment.** Research shows that difficulty finding child care is one of the strongest predictors of self-reported neglect, including severity of substance use and other mental health challenges.³ In addition to child care allowing access to treatment, child care can be a key component in maximizing safety when caregivers use substances by ensuring children have appropriate caregivers in both low risk and high risk scenarios.⁴ In Colorado, only 3.1% of treatment providers provide child care to parents accessing treatment services.⁵ HB24-1223 increases access to CCAP for families who need it most by adding engagement in substance use treatment as a qualifying activity to receive CCAP.

When families have access to concrete supports, we strengthen the foundation for families to thrive. **We urge you to support increased access to CCAP by voting 'yes' on HB24-1223.**

Sincerely,

Lex Loutzenhiser, Policy Manager

lloutzenhiser@illuminatecolorado.org

¹ Center for the Study of Social Policy. (n.d.) About Strengthening Families and the protective factors framework. Retrieved From:

<https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/protective-factors-framework/>

² Yang, M. Y., Maguire-Jack, K., Showalter, K., Kim, Y. K., & Slack, K. S. (2019). Child care subsidy and child maltreatment. *Child & Family Social Work*, 24(4), 547-554. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12635>.

³ Cash, S. J., & Wilke, D. J. (2003). An ecological model of maternal substance abuse and child neglect: Issues, analyses, and recommendations. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 73(4), 392-404. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0002-9432.73.4.392>.

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2015). *World Drug Report 2015*. United Nations publication, Sales No.E.15.XI.6. Retrieved from http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr2015/World_Drug_Report_2015.pdf

⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2022). 2022 State Profile - National Substance Use and Mental Health Services Survey (N-SUMHSS). Retrieved From: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt42713/NSUMHSS-State-Profile-22.pdf>

House Health & Human Services

03/12/2024 Upon Adjournment

HB24-1223 Improved Access to the Child Care Assistance Prog

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Cody Belzley</p> <p>For</p> <p>Council for a Strong America (CSA) and ReadyNation Colorado</p>	<p>Dear House Health and Human Services Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing on behalf of Council for a Strong America (CSA) and ReadyNation Colorado to urge your support for HB 24-1223.</p> <p>CSA is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites membership organizations including law enforcement leaders (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids), retired admirals and generals (Mission: Readiness), and business executives (ReadyNation), that promote evidence-based solutions to ensure our children will be prepared for successful lives.</p> <p>I am pleased to be a member of the ReadyNation network of business leaders. CSA/ReadyNation Colorado recently completed work on a Colorado specific research report that demonstrates the impact of insufficient child care on the Colorado economy. The result of that work, which will be released in April, is that Colorado parents, businesses, and taxpayers combined are losing \$2.7 billion annually due to the child care crisis affecting infants and toddlers alone.</p> <p>HB 24-1223 will assist in providing families with the support they need to meet the child care challenges they face by streamlining and strengthening the eligibility and enrollment processes of the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). The legislation proposes improvements to CCCAP that will support families struggling to make ends meet. Included in the legislation are changes that align with newly released federal rules as well as changes that are unique to Colorado’s needs.</p> <p>The coalition supporting HB 24-1223 is broad and includes individuals and organizations that have long championed improvements to the subsidy program for families. This</p>

	<p>action is necessary to expand the supply of child care in Colorado and I urge your support for this critical legislation.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Cody Belzley,</p> <p>Common Good Consulting</p>
<p>Liliana Mazzeo</p> <p>For</p> <p>themselves</p>	<p>Thank you to the Health and Human Services Committee for the opportunity to present my testimony today.</p> <p>My name is LILIANA MAZZEO, I am a Licensed Childcare Provider, wife and mother of 2 teenage children. I live in the city of Englewood, Arapahoe County. I have a home base childcare and I am a CCCAP provider.</p> <p>Today I speak out in strong support of HB24- 1223 and ask for your votes in favor of this bill.</p> <p>In 2023 I applied to become a CCCAP provider. The process was not easy, but I was very happy to receive confirmation that I was on the list of CCAP providers. But everything changed when they sent me the process for monitoring the children's attendance and the method of payment.</p> <p>The children's attendance tracking is done through the ATS program, which is not easy to use, and it is mandatory for CCAP providers to receive the corresponding payment. Parents mark attendance in the ATS program and if there is any error or omission, a process must be followed at the county which is more complicated and while it is resolved, which can be a very long time, the provider is left without her payment. This process is very complicated, and I do not think it is fair, it requires administrative work that I do not do because I use a simpler system that allows me to focus on the children's education.</p> <p>For that reason, I decided that, even though I am on the CCCAP provider list, I'm not accepting children who are in this program.</p> <p>This bill proposes the same payment and attendance system that I use in my home base childcare, and this would help all parents to follow the same rules. The upfront payment system and payment based on enrollment rather than attendance of the child ensures financial stability for me because my expenses and my childcare expenses are generated regardless</p>

	<p>of whether the child attends or not. In addition, my childcare license allows me to care for a limited number of children in my home and if a child does not attend, his or her spot is filled and can be used for another child who also needs childcare.</p> <p>Implementing the system improvements proposed in this bill would help me reconsider my decision and accept children in the CCCAP program.</p> <p>Thank you, committee for your time and thank you again to the sponsors of this bill. I ask you to vote "yes" on HB24- 1223.</p>
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To: House Committee Health and Human Services

March 12, 2024

Dear Chair Daugherty and members of the committee,

My name is Perrine Monnet, and I am a Policy Analyst at the Bell Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to write to you today to express our support for House Bill 24-1223 for Improved Access to the Child Care Assistance Program.

Over the years, at the Bell, we have done significant research on the importance of accessible, affordable, and quality child care for children, families, and entire communities. Not only is child care important for a child's future economic mobility, but it allows families to remain in the workforce impacting their economic mobility and ability to provide for their family.

Across the country, child care remains one of the largest house hold expenses. In our research, we found that in Colorado, in 2022, families paid between 13 and 30 percent of median household income on child care, depending on geography, setting, and the age of the child. This is well over the Department of Health and Human Services' recommendation that no more than 7 percent of a family's income should be spent on child care.

In the immediate term, the high cost of child care can cause family members to reduce their work hours to provide care and, in some cases, leave the workforce altogether and forego wages. The high cost of child care can also make it difficult to cover other expenses like food and housing. In the longer term, this makes it difficult to save for retirement or a college fund.

CCCAP is an important subsidy for families in need of affordable child care. Despite this, challenges remain in ensuring Coloradans access the support needed to afford child care. The application process is difficult and noted by many as arduous for both providers and families. And in fact, the process deters some providers from accepting CCCAP and can cause families to lose their CCCAP subsidy.

Finally, in order to support families in accessing affordable child care, we must also address the workforce challenges in the industry. Providers have a hard time recruiting and retaining early childhood educators, in part due to the low pay. HB24-1223 expands CCCAP eligibility to early childhood professionals and represents a possibility to recruit workers to the field as well as retain current child care workers who struggle to afford child care for their own children.

House Bill 24-1223 would help alleviate many of these challenges. By capping parent copayments, retaining the workforce, and creating presumptive eligibility, affordability for families will be ensured, with a healthier more supported workforce, and fewer barriers for parents and families in accessing affordable child care. I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 24-1223 for the Improved Access to the Child Care Assistance Program.

Thank you for your time,

Perrine Monnet

Policy Analyst, Bell Policy Center