

2/2/26

Dear Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for your time in considering written and in person testimony regarding SB26-019: Early Childhood Local System Consolidation.

My name is Lisa Jansen Thompson and I serve as the Executive Director for the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC), the early childhood council (“Council”) serving Adams County. We are one of the three Councils who has a separate Local Coordinating Organization (“LCO”). I am providing written testimony to request your support of SB26-019. Having two entities has created confusion between the Council and LCO in Adams County community for the past 2 ½ years regarding the roles and responsibilities of each as it pertains to improving the quality, access, and availability of early care and education programs for families.

Given the current state budget constraints and the concerns posed by the Joint Budget Committee last year, ensuring the state has one, consolidated and coordinated early childhood system is critical. As the Council, we can easily streamline and integrate the responsibilities that are set forth by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) for the local support for the Universal Preschool Program (UPK). As an organization that has been in existence since 2004, we have the needed infrastructure, programs, and staff to fulfill these duties through a seamless system for both early care and education providers and families. Over the past 21 years, we have built strong relationships with the early care and education providers in our community and currently find it to be challenging to refer providers to another organization (the LCO) when they have questions about UPK, when we are already on-site working with them to support them through our programming. Currently, 66% of providers who are not school districts or Head Start are working with both the Council and the LCO.

Furthermore, with the increased focus on quality programming for those providing UPK services now that the UPK is fully implemented, ECPAC’s staff have an average of 9 years of experience as quality improvement coaches. CDEC is working to streamline quality standards for both childcare and UPK programming and this can best be achieved with efficiency when the same staff with high levels of existing expertise and experience can support this alignment.

As needed, our Council also has Family Support Specialists who are supporting families in finding childcare and could easily integrate the UPK process into their existing support instead of having families who may have two children work with two different organizations to support them in finding care for both their 2 year old and their preschooler.

Through this integration, ECPAC feels confident that we could meet the requirements of supporting the UPK program and integrating that work with the other, holistic early childhood support we provide children and families in our community. We are working closely with the current LCO – Adams County Connections – to collaboratively work towards the best solution for Adams County.