



DATE: April 22, 2026

TO: Senate Health & Human Services Committee Members

FROM: Alethea Gomez, Colorado Executive Director, EPIC

Dear Committee Members,

Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) is the Colorado business community's voice for early childhood care and education. Our membership of over 70 business executives believes that what's good for children is good for business and significantly impacts the economic growth and well-being of Colorado.

I am writing to share our support for HB 26-1260. We are supportive of the four policies which were required by HB 24-1223:

- Prospective payment of providers;
- Paying providers based on enrollment rather than attendance;
- Capping parent fees at 7% of income; and
- Using grants and contracts to support high-needs populations.

We recognize that they will support affordability for families, support the sustainability of child care businesses, and help to address child care shortages. All of these things are important for shoring up our struggling child care system in Colorado and addressing true needs of families and providers.

We see this portion of the bill as a technical clean-up. HB 24-1223 was drafted to align with federal rules that make the same requirements. The Department of Early Childhood was granted authorization by the federal government to delay implementation until 2028, and this bill aligns implementation with that date. Additionally, we support the requirement in the bill for additional transparency and accountability for county and state-level administrative and indirect costs.

Given the budget reality that we are facing in Colorado right now, delayed implementation gives us a pragmatic way to keep important policies in statute to provide improved supports for child care providers and families through CCCAP, and reporting requirements will help to ensure that the state and counties are maximizing available resources.

We are asking for your yes vote on this bill today. Please reach out with any questions.

Respectfully,

Alethea Gomez

April 21, 2026

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

I am writing in support of HB-26 1260 Updates to Child Care Assistance Programs.

I'm President & CEO of Mile High Early Learning, the largest provider for families accessing CCCAP in Denver County. We serve over 400 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years in our child care centers and 180 through child care partner sites.

The provisions outlined in this bill reflect practices used in the private child care sector and will:

- Make child care more affordable for families by limiting parent fees to 7% of income:
  - 95% of families enrolled at Mile High Early Learning live at or below poverty guidelines with close to 70% working or going to school. Currently, a family could pay up to 14% of their family co-pay, which is a significant expense.
- Stabilize and sustain the child care industry:
  - by paying child care providers prospectively, which gives us financial predictability allowing us to plan. Currently, child care providers received CCCAP payments two to three weeks after providing the child care services
  - By reimbursing child care providers based on enrollment rather than attendance ensures that we can pay our early childhood teachers a living wage, which is how school districts are funded. Districts receive their annual PPOR based on the number of children that attend on just one day of the year. For CCCAP payments, counties are only required to cover three absences. Some counties don't pay for federal holidays. Yet our costs continue even when a child is absent.
- Improve child care access to underserved communities through targeted grants.

I believe that it is vital that we continue as a state to work towards implementing these critical policies. My hope is that we can implement them as soon as possible. However, understanding the challenges of the state's budget crisis, while also seeing the impact of the CCCAP freeze on our families, I support delayed implementation of the policies as described in this bill.

And I want to be clear; I don't provide my support lightly. Our families have been significantly impacted by the CCCAP freeze. 95% of our families live at or below poverty, and 2/3 are working. Since the freeze in January 2025, Mile High Early Learning is now serving 40 fewer children—primarily for infants and toddlers. We have closed two of our centers in high need communities. We anticipate losing close to \$1 million in revenue by the end of this year.

However, if waiting two years continues our progress as a state to implement these policies versus eliminating the policies altogether, then I will wait.

Sincerely,  
Pamela Harris, PhD  
President & CEO

Mr. Chair and members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1260, Updates to Child Care Assistance Program.

My name is Ana Bustamante, and I serve as the Colorado State Manager for Save the Children Action Network (SCAN). As the political advocacy arm of Save the Children, we build bipartisan support to ensure every child has a strong start in life.

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) is a lifeline for families. It provides subsidized, high-quality child care to low-income families so parents can go to work or school, and children can receive early childhood education. Unfortunately, as of this February, 19 counties have frozen new CCCAP enrollments, and 5 counties are utilizing active waitlists to serve prioritized populations.

HB 1260 gives Colorado's Department of Early Childhood the flexibility needed to respond to our fiscal reality while working toward lasting solutions for CCCAP. The bill delays implementation of four essential provisions that improve access to affordable, quality child care for families while stabilizing the child care infrastructure with updated payment models for providers until August 1, 2028.

We believe that the four provisions are essential to improving CCAP. However, while the policies delayed in this bill did not cause the freezes and waitlists, should they be implemented, they would exacerbate the crisis. By postponing this implementation, we will maintain the policies in statute while acknowledging the state's financial reality.

Additionally, HB 1260 adds a new reporting requirement to the department's existing annual report. This will increase transparency and provide the data needed for informed, long-term solutions to the ongoing freezes.

We need long-term solutions to the state's childcare crisis, in general, and to the CCAP freezes in particular.

I have spoken with child care center directors who have been forced to close their doors due to unstable funding. After decades of service, one Denver director told me she may soon have to close, not because her work isn't needed or valued, but because the instability of early childhood funding makes it nearly impossible to keep operating. Centers serving low-income families cannot simply raise tuition to make up for lost funds, as the families are already financially stretched. The result is that families cannot work because they lack access to care, and children miss out on stable, high-quality early learning environments that set the foundation for lifelong success.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support and vote 'YES' on House Bill 1260.  
Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.



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# HB26-1260

## Updates to Child Care Assistance Programs

Perrine Monnet, Senior Policy Analyst, April 22, 2026

Thank you Chair, and members of the committee. My name is Perrine Monnet, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the Bell Policy Center. The Bell Policy Center provides policymakers, advocates, and the public with reliable resources to create a practical policy agenda that promotes economic mobility for every Coloradan.

I would like to express the Bell's support of HB26-1260, Updates to the Child Care Assistance Program.

As you all are aware, the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, or CCCAP, is critical in ensuring that families across the state can access affordable, quality child care. It is the difference between families and working parents being able to maintain their job, and put food on the table or parents leaving the workforce to care for their child. But CCCAP has come with challenges that Colorado stepped in to address in the 2024 legislative session.

The policies that were put forward in 2024, such as capping parent co-payments to ensure affordability, compensating providers prospectively and paying rates based on enrollment to help stabilize their business, were good policies. And we still believe these policies should be implemented for the economic well being of parents and child care providers. However, with the constrained budget Colorado is facing, we understand that delaying the implementation of these policies is the best choice.

Delaying implementation acknowledges the fiscal responsibility that is required of our budget while still centering good policy to improve the child care system for Coloradans. Thank you for your time and we ask for a Yes vote on HB26-1260.