



April 2026

To: House Education Committee

Re: AAUW Supports SB019--Early Childhood Local System Consolidation

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. Accessible, affordable early childhood education remains one of the primary barriers for working mothers to overcome. A healthy early childhood ecosystem is crucial for the state's economy and the well-being of children and families.

For many years, County Early Childhood Councils in Colorado have been responsible for providing early childhood services to families. More recently Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) were established to implement the Universal Preschool Program.

Most counties have absorbed these responsibilities into their ECCs. SB019 requires that all counties follow that practice, and it outlines the obligations of the Councils toward that consolidation. In these very tight budget times, it makes sense to eliminate duplication of administrative costs and focus our efforts on achieving our goals.

For these reasons, AAUW of Colorado strongly supports SB019 and urges your YES vote in committee and throughout the process of becoming law.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Hon. Su Ryden
AAUW Colorado Advocacy Director

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Aurora, CO 80017
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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.



April 16, 2026

RE: Support of SB26-019

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing both as Chair of the Governmental Affairs Council of the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce and as CEO of Joint Initiatives for Youth and Families, which serves as both the LCO for the universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) program in El Paso County, and we host the Early Childhood Council (ECC). The Chamber has prioritized childcare as an economic need in our community as we have only 18,400 seats for 47,000 children under age 5, which is impacting the local workforce and economy.

This bill has been very much needed from the point of view that the statutory language for LCOs and for early childhood councils can create confusion about who is doing what. In addition to supporting the bill, I want to also ensure understanding that the UPK and ECC funds are distinct streams that have resulted in very different programs at the local level, all of which are critical to building our childcare capacity.

LCO Role for UPK Program

Last year our team:

- Supported 8,240 communications from our 230 participating providers
- Responded to 12,976 communications with families, and another 1,524 Zendesk tickets
- Totaling almost 23,000 requests for help fielded by 3 FTEs
- This year, 5,100 children are enrolled in the CUPP program, a 91% match rate for 4-year-olds

ECC Role

JI has a Foundations Department that implements the programs that were created under our early childhood council's regional strategic plan. These include:

- EMBED, which started as a pilot to **interrupt the preschool to prison pipeline**, is now being scaled. In the pilot, we engage six childcare centers that serve at-risk families. In the year before the pilot, these centers expelled 12 children. In the year during the pilot, they expelled one.
- Our **workforce program** recruited and provided 65 OEDIT scholarships for ECE teacher accreditation, and JI staff provided career navigation to 256 professionals pursuing early childhood careers. This workforce program recently received an award from OEDIT.
- A JI team supports people **opening new centers**, which has been as high as 30 per year.
- And a JI team supports **quality improvement**: 42 local programs moved up in ratings last year.

As you are considering creating efficiencies, please know that at the local level, we do not have duplication between the LCO and Council statutory constructs.

Sincerely,

SherryLynn Boyles
President + CEO

House Education

04/16/2026

SB26-019 Early Childhood Local System Consolidation

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Davon Williams For themselves	} Written Testimony â€“ SB26-019 Chair and Members of the Committee, My name is Davon Williams. I previously served as a director within a public school district, and I am currently a candidate for House District 3. I am offering these comments from the perspective of someone who has worked within public systems serving children and families. SB26-019 focuses on strengthening and aligning Coloradoâ€™s early childhood infrastructure by expanding the role of local early childhood councils and improving coordination across programs and services. In my experience, one of the biggest challenges families face is not always access itself, but navigating fragmented systems that are difficult to understand and inconsistent across communities. Efforts to better coordinate services, streamline communication, and align local resources can make a meaningful difference for families trying to access early childhood supports. When systems are more connected, outcomes tend to improve not just for children, but for schools and communities as well. At the same time, implementation will be critical. Expanding responsibilities at the local level must come with clear accountability, transparency, and alignment with existing education systems to ensure that coordination efforts truly reduce barriers rather than create new ones.

	<p>From my experience in public education, strong systems are built not just on structure, but on clarity, communication, and trust between agencies and the communities they serve.</p> <p>For these reasons, I support SB26-019 and appreciate the focus on improving how early childhood services are delivered across Colorado.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Best, Davon Williams</p>
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Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lucas Epp, and I serve the community of Custer County as an elected Commissioner. One of the departments that we manage as commissioners is the Custer County Kids Council or the Early Childhood Council. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB26-019.

In the work that the Kids Council does in our community, I try to view policy decisions through a simple question: How does this affect the children in our community? When I look through the eyes of a child, my focus shifts from programs and systems to whether families can access the various support systems they need for their children to grow, learn and thrive.

Custer County is what many would call a frontier community where access to early childhood services can be challenging. Families often travel long distances for care, provider capacity is limited and many programs rely on strong partnerships to function. Coordination across services is essential due to the realities of our small rural community.

The Custer County Kids Council serves as a local backbone organization, working with our school district, public health department, county leadership, providers, and community partners to help families navigate childcare, preschool, health services, and family support systems.

From an adult's perspective, these systems may seem separate but from a child's perspective these systems are not separate. A child's healthy development depends on stable care, strong early learning opportunities, and coordinated community support.

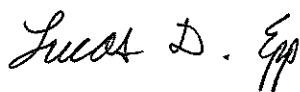
SB26-019 strengthens Colorado's early childhood infrastructure by aligning responsibilities within Early Childhood Councils and reinforcing the role councils play in coordinating services and supporting families and providers at the local level.

This alignment helps reduce fragmentation and strengthens the local partnerships that families rely on to access programs such as Universal Preschool and childcare assistance.

To strengthen not only early childhood systems but the future of our community we need to put children at the center of our policymaking.

I, Lucas Epp, a Custer County Commissioner respectfully urges your support of SB26-019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucas D. Epp". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'E'.

Lucas Epp

County of Custer, Commissioner