

February XX, 2019

The Honorable Dominick Moreno
Chair, Joint Budget Committee of the Colorado General Assembly
Legislative Services Building, 3rd Floor
200 East 14th Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Members of the Joint Budget Committee:

On behalf of the undersigned, we are writing to request you address the critical need for additional funding to support the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). Specifically, we ask that you address the need for \$10.5 million to maintain current levels of service and an additional \$11.2 million to begin to realize the purpose of the JBC-sponsored HB18-1335 from last year.

CCCAP provides child care assistance to low-income families so that parents can go to work, job training, or school, and children can access the early childhood experiences that support their healthy development. CCCAP is a prime example of a two generation model—a program that helps families achieve self-sufficiency and children access quality early childhood education to help them thrive. We know that quality early childcare builds the foundation that supports lifelong learning and earning.

The Joint Budget Committee demonstrated its commitment to CCCAP by passage of HB18-1335 last year. This bill standardized various components of the program by establishing a statewide eligibility floor of 185% of FPL, increasing the income at which families are moved off the program, and standardizing (and in many cases increasing) child care provider rates across the state. Critical to the vision of HB18-1335 was the idea that CCCAP-eligible children should have the same access to child care as children in the general population in Colorado. CCCAP funding can serve approximately 9% of the eligible population, compared to 31% of the general population that regularly accesses licensed child care. We are worried that without additional funding fewer children will be served by CCCAP.

While we are all looking forward to eventually achieving this parity—central to HB18-1335—there is a more immediate funding need due to provisions of last year's legislation that, if not addressed, could actually set the program and its participants back significantly. **The January 1, 2019 Request for Information (RFI) delivered to the JBC by CDHS cautions that in order maintain the current level of service, families need the support of an additional \$10.53 million in funding for the program.** Without the funding to address increased rates, quality, and time spent in the program, *fewer* low-income children and families will be served in this very important program.

Additionally, the RFI concludes that each 1% increase in access to the CCCAP program, as envisioned by HB18-1335, an additional \$11.2 million will need to be invested in FY19-20. We hope the JBC will continue the momentum that began with the passage of HB18-1335 and fund CCCAP at a level to begin to realize parity between low-income Coloradans and the broader population of families that rely on child care.

We would also like to stress the importance of funding including a mix of federal and state funds. Doing so ensures we do not serve fewer children at a lower level while avoiding undue pressure on the federal CCDBG block grants.

We realize that as members of the JBC you face many pressures and funding requests. We know, however, the learning gap between advantaged and at-risk children exists as early as 9 months of age and that at-risk children can start kindergarten as much as 18 months behind their peers. Investments in early childhood through CCCAP will help close that gap and provide a return on this important upfront investment.

Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of Colorado's young children. We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have and look forward to continuing our collaboration to ensure sufficient and effective investments in early childhood remain a priority in Colorado.

Very sincerely,

Supporters:

For more information, please contact: