

**Testimony in support of HB20-1053(Supports For Early Childhood Educator Workforce)
Delivered by Khatira Amn, Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning**

June 09, 2020

Submitted to: Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee

Hello, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Khatira Amn and I am an Early Childhood Education Policy Advocate at Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. Spring Institute is a nationally-recognized provider of effective intercultural learning programs and services with the mission of empowering people and organizations to succeed across languages and cultures.

My husband was with the US army in Afghanistan. Two years ago, I (with my husband and three children) immigrated from Afghanistan as a special immigrant visa holder because we were not safe there anymore. I had a law degree and was an attorney in Afghanistan. I am not able to practice law in the U.S., however, I have been able to use my skills as an advocate for dual language learners through the Spring Institute. I have three children and my third child is two years old. As a mother and a refugee, I have seen that our system lacks to provide equal, affordable, and culturally responsive care for all children, especially children who speak languages other than English. I advocate on behalf of refugees and immigrants to address barriers and increase access to high-quality early childhood education for dual language learners. Ready Tots, a program through Spring Institute, is a community-based program working with children birth to age 4. They also work with their parents and guardians focusing on social and emotional development for both the child and parent. In 2019 alone, Ready Tots engaged over 100 children and more than 50 parents in improving family health literacy and school readiness.

I see every day that early childhood education access is a major concern and challenge for the community we work with, particularly dual language learners, immigrants, and refugees. Children who are dual language learners are defined as children ages 0-8 who have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English at home. They comprise 28% of children ages 0-8 in Colorado. Like all parents, immigrant and refugee parents want the best for their children and understand that quality education is tremendously important for their children's development and cultural integration. And, like all parents, immigrants and refugees also need to balance their career goals and work responsibilities with child care needs. Unfortunately, the shortage of quality, affordable, culturally competent early child care programs in Colorado means that nearly 60% of dual language learner children ages 3-4 are *not* enrolled in a pre-K program. Colorado's working parents can't get to work without early childhood educators.

Demand for early childhood educators is expected to increase by nearly 20% in the next 10 years. The challenges of child care access, affordability, and quality can only be addressed by building a system of support and development for early care and education teachers. These programs were already facing a crisis in recruiting and retaining educators and now the pandemic negatively impacted them as well. With the components of HB 20-1053 retained in the bill, we can streamline pathways to the classroom, including alternative routes to the profession, and reduce burdens paperwork on our early care and education providers.

Also, the economic and health trauma of this crisis, the disruption to children's learning, and the mental health challenges parents of young children are facing are all resulting in a need for efficient alignment of programs supporting young children's behavioral health needs. Components in the HB20-1006 will support programs in responding to a spike in early childhood mental health needs we are seeing as a result of the crisis.

By supporting these policy changes, we can make it easier on providers to attract and retain teachers, support providers in responding to the behavioral health challenges young children may experience as a result of the crisis, and help providers access the coaching and quality improvement funds they need to provide early care and education in a new normal. Thank you for your consideration and commitment to Colorado's families.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee,

My name is Nicole Riehl and I am the President and CEO of Executives Partnering to Invest in Children, otherwise known as EPIC. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 20-1053.

EPIC was founded by a group of influential business, philanthropic and nonprofit leaders 10 year ago who understood that investments made during the early and formative years of children's lives pay huge dividends to our economy and society. Our bipartisan membership of high level business leaders represent companies and various industries across Colorado and work through EPIC as early childhood business champions to find innovative and fiscally sound solutions that work for children, families, employers and our state as a whole.

We are focused on advocating for policies that improve the availability and affordability of early childhood care and education, and, with a special focus on addressing the economic model of child care, we are prioritizing solutions that help child care business owners attract and retain qualified workers while offering quality and affordable care to parents.

The COVID crisis has further exposed the fragility of the child care sector while underlining the importance of access to child care for the workforce. We have seen a steep decline in access to child care, which has been worsened by recent events and is affecting economic recovery. Our state's inability to recruit and retain quality early educators is a direct contributor to our inability to meet child care demands for the larger workforce in Colorado.

We must take steps to address the critical shortage of early childhood educators and provide them with the tools they need to ensure children have strong social-emotional supports and the skills they need to reach their full potential. These professionals are shaping and supporting our future workforce, who 15 to 20 years from now will be keeping Colorado's economy strong and should be valued as such.

House Bill 1053 has been designed and thoroughly vetted by a broad range of stakeholders with deep and relevant knowledge of this industry and the needs of

the early childhood educators. If passed, this legislation will make significant strides in creating more aligned, responsive, and competency-based career pathways which will lead to improved recruitment of early childhood educators. This legislation will also lay the groundwork for streamlined regulatory processes and clearer entry points into the early childhood profession from other industries for future work force expansion, while ensuring businesses within the industry receive ongoing supports needed for sustainability.

I urge you to support this bill. Your vote will support the success of many child care professionals and small child care business owners, now and in the future. Thank you for your time!

Nicole Riehl
President & CEO
Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)



Chaer Robert, Coordinator
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
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HB20-1053- Measures to Support the Early Childhood Educator Workforce

Representatives Sirota and Wilson and Senators Story and Pettersen

My name is Chaer Robert, and I serve as Coordinator of the Skills2Compete- Colorado Coalition. Skills2Compete Colorado is a multi-sector policy advocacy coalition focused on greater access to education and training opportunities which ultimately lead to middle skilled jobs. We have particular interest in addressing system challenges which people face.

We have supported HB20-1053 since its introduction as it focused on the early childhood educator career pathway. Not only was there a shortage of early childhood workers jeopardizing the availability of child care for the larger workforce, those working in the field struggling with low wages and limited opportunities for advancement. And some with the passion, experience, and skills for the work lacked needed credentials to work in the field.

While much was removed from the original bill due to plummeting state revenues, many of the proposals we endorsed remain, spelled out on pages 3-5. The bill includes measures to address what is often a barrier for low income Coloradans seeking a better job. For most, the sequence of earning a credential first, then later earning a paycheck does not work. The need for income to meet basic needs is ongoing.

- The bill allows an early care and education program to be licensed for a period of time with a certain number of employees working toward a credential, rather than having already obtain one.
- The bill will allow a person to earn points toward a credential based on prior experience or demonstrated competence. Credit for life experience and prior learning, rather than formal classroom training alone, allows us to assess competence and skills and give credit for such.
- The bill creates a process to support reciprocity for early childhood educator credentials or qualifications earned outside Colorado.

Together, these measures help address worker shortages and promote greater diversity of our ECE workforce. Helping those with talents, experience and passion for this work get into ECE classrooms benefits all.

Please support HB20-1053.

6/10/20



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Please support HB20-1053.

6/10/20



Please support HB 20-1053 Concerning Supports for the Early Childhood Workforce as Amended
Reps. Sirota, Wilson, McCluskie/Sens. Story, Pettersen

Mental Health Colorado supports HB 20-1053 and requests your yes vote. Colorado needs to respond to the spike in early childhood mental health needs we are seeing as a result of the pandemic. We need a more efficient alignment of programs supporting young children's health needs because of the economic and health trauma, the disruption to children's learning, and the mental health challenges among parents of young children.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) connects early childhood professionals, families, and young children with qualified early childhood and mental health professionals. Consultants provide support and guidance in areas such as behavior management, emotion regulation strategies, classroom management, skill building, and social-emotional development. Results of early childhood mental health consultation services include:

- Less classroom burnout for early childhood educators
- Decrease in suspensions and expulsions in early childhood settings
- Increase in emotional regulation skills in young children
- Increase in early identification of mental health or developmental delays

Colorado's working parents can't go to work without early childhood educators. Demand for early childhood educators is expected to increase by 20% in 10 years. The challenges of childcare access, affordability, and quality can only be addressed by building a system of support and development for early care and education teachers. As amended, this bill will advance three key priorities:

- 1) Support childcare programs that are reopening to serve children and families. Childcare providers stepped up to care for children during the height of the crisis to make sure our emergency and essential workforce could get to work. These programs were already facing a crisis in recruiting and retaining educators so that they can provide childcare and parents can work. With the components of HB 20-1053 retained in the bill, we can streamline pathways to the classroom, including alternative routes to the profession, and reduce paperwork burdens on our early care and education providers. (HB 20-1053)
- 2) Support programs in responding to a spike in early childhood mental health needs. (HB 20-1006)
- 3) Support greater flexibility for the 34 statewide Early Childhood Councils and the state Office of Early Childhood in supporting quality, responsive programming for all programs and educators regardless of their level of quality. (HB 20-1016)

Please vote yes on HB 20-1053!

Sincerely,
Moe Keller
Director of Advocacy
Mental Health Colorado
720-208-2224

**The Women's Foundation of Colorado
HB20-1053 Testimony**

Alison Friedman Phillips, Director of Programs, alisonp@wfco.org

My name is Alison Friedman Phillips and I am the director of programs at The Women's Foundation of Colorado. First, I want to share my gratitude for your consideration of this bill and willingness to address what we believe is one of the most critical supports for Colorado's economy-especially in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The Women's Foundation of Colorado is a unique community foundation that creates more pathways to economic security for Colorado women. For over 30 years, we have closely tracked the indicators that research shows lead to economic security. We've learned from our research and directly from our grantees what it takes to thrive in our state.

WFCO cares deeply about improving access to high-quality and affordable early care and education because it is imperative for parents of young children to enter, succeed, and remain in the workforce to meet their families' needs. We believe that by streamlining pathways to the classroom, supporting early childhood mental health, and providing flexibility to support early childhood programming, our state will be able to sustain and potentially increase the availability of child care throughout Colorado.

Research, in partnership with what we learn from our statewide stakeholders, guides our public policy priorities and grantmaking strategies. There is clear evidence which shows that children, and their families, are better off developmentally and economically when they can participate in an early care and education (ECE) program – especially one that has mental health support and is high-quality. Research also shows it creates a ripple effect to the health of our economy. According to a report by the Council for a Strong America, Colorado is missing out on \$2.2 billion annually of economic impact because of the lack of infant/toddler child care¹.

Additionally, through our statewide grantmaking and convening which brings organizations together from Pueblo to Denver to Fort Morgan and to Eagle, we have learned from those serving families with low incomes that access to ECE is a key barrier to being more economically secure. In the first 1.5 years of our WAGES grantmaking cohort, an estimated 613 women and 1,288 members of their households were served through our direct service grantees. Since the beginning of our grantmaking cycle we have surveyed our grantees about the top barriers to achieving economic security and access to child care continually makes the top of the list. In fact, this dynamic group of organizations told us that they believe improving the ECE workforce should be a top priority for WFCO in 2020.

We have also had the privilege of being part of convening expert stakeholders to better understand effective solutions for the ECE workforce. Throughout 2019 we brought together a

¹ [Council for a Strong America Colorado, Want to Grow Colorado's Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis, March 2020](#)

large group of stakeholders representing diverse geographic regions, types of organizations including nonprofit, government, and business, and other intersections of the ECE sector including representatives of the mixed delivery system, to have deep and meaningful conversations about what we can do as a state to bolster the ECE workforce. I am proud to say that the viewpoints of this group are represented in this bill and that many of the groups formally signed on as supporters and/or have submitted virtual testimony.

Final, in the midst of the global pandemic, women, and especially women who are black, indigenous, or people of color, have not only taken on the bulk of caregiving duties but also are more likely to lose a job and/or be deemed an essential worker. This burden coupled with the fact that many Colorado women who are able to go back to work might not have a child care provider available to them could mean devastation for Colorado's economy. To support a thriving child care sector that allows for Colorado families to go back to work means increasing pathways to the profession, providing vital mental health resources, and sustaining high-quality programs.

Thank you for taking the time to review to my testimony and considering this important piece of legislation. Please vote yes on 1053 because everyone depends on someone who depends on child care.

Catalyzing community to advance and accelerate economic opportunities for women and their families

The Women's Foundation of Colorado | 1901 E. Asbury Avenue, Denver, CO 80208 | www.wfco.org



Educating, preparing, and empowering
teen mothers and children

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

On behalf of Florence Crittenton Services, I ask that you support HB20-1053, Concerning Supports for the Early Childhood Workforce, as amended in the House.

Florence Crittenton Services is a Colorado non-profit that educates, prepares, and empowers teen mothers and their children to become productive members of the community. Our comprehensive, two-generation approach provides academic, social-emotional and health support for pregnant and parenting girls, along with Early Childhood Education for children ages six weeks through Pre-K.

Our teen mothers cannot go to school without early childhood educators. Given the even greater need for early childhood educators (ECE) due to safety measures needed to safely run ECE centers, demand is likely to continue to increase. The challenges of child-care access for our teen mothers can only be addressed by building a system of support and development for early care and education teachers.

HB20-1053 will advance three primary initiatives to support young children in response to the pandemic:

- 1) Support child-care programs that are reopening to serve children and families. It was already challenging to recruit and retain educators prior to the pandemic and it may be more so as we will need more educators to ensure proper social distancing for the children and the educators.
- 2) Support the mental health needs of our students, who face even more challenges due to the pandemic. The economic and health trauma of this crisis, the disruption to children's learning and social interaction, and the mental health challenges parents of young children are facing are all resulting in a need for a more efficient alignment of programs supporting young children's behavioral health needs.
- 3) Provide flexibility to support quality early childhood programming.

Early childhood education is not always the most "obvious" issue to advance during a crisis, even in the midst of a pandemic. But as we have seen, our early childhood educators and programs are essential to ensure our essential workers have the ability to get to work and our economy can open up and grow again. By supporting these policy changes, we can make it easier on providers to attract and retain teachers, support providers in responding to the behavioral health challenges young children may experience as a result of the crisis, and help providers access the coaching and quality improvement funds they need to provide early care and education in a new normal.

Again, I urge you to support HB20-1053, Concerning Supports for the Early Childhood Workforce as amended.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Banning
President and CEO



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1053: Supports for Early Childhood Educator Workforce
Submitted on behalf of Clayton Early Learning**

To: Chair Foote and Members of the State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee:

My name is Christina Walker and I am the director of policy and advocacy at Clayton Early Learning. Clayton is a large early childhood education non-profit improving the early care and learning for thousands of young children birth to age 5 throughout Colorado. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to share our support for House Bill 1053.

There is a lack of quality, affordable early care and learning options throughout Colorado. Far too many Colorado families find themselves patching together less expensive, less stable care arrangements in order to work, and according to a recent National Survey of Children's Health, 12% of Colorado children under the age of 6 had a parent report that they or another family member had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job because of problems with child care. We need to do better to best support our working families and the early childhood professionals who are doing the vitally important work of taking care of our children.

This bill will provide much needed supports to child care programs that have remained open or are reopening during the COVID crisis to serve children and families. Child care providers stepped up to care for children during the height of the crisis to make sure working parents in essential industries could get to work. It is important to note that these programs were already facing a crisis in recruiting and retaining educators even before the crisis. That is why we need this bill, which would: 1) streamline pathways to the classroom, including alternative routes to the profession, and reduce burdensome paperwork on our early care and education providers; 2) support programs in responding to a spike in early childhood mental health needs we are seeing as a result of the crisis through early childhood mental health consultation; and 3) support greater flexibility for the 34 statewide Early Childhood Councils and the state Office of Early Childhood in supporting quality, responsive programming for all programs and educators regardless of their level of quality.

We believe that this bill will allow for collaboration amongst all invested stakeholders across the state to build a stronger system of early care and learning. The research is clear that the early years are the most effective time to invest and lay a foundation for future learning and achievement. Colorado has made great strides supporting our state's youngest children and their families, but we have more to do to ensure that all children are healthy, valued and thriving. We at Clayton Early Learning believe this bill will signal that Colorado continues to prioritize quality care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, as well as supportive policies for the early childhood educators working to care for and educate our state's youngest learners.

Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me (cwalker@claytonearlylearning.org; cell: 440.223.1907) should you have any questions.

Best,
Christina Walker
Director, Policy & Advocacy
Clayton Early Learning

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Committee Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs
Meeting Date 06/10/2020 Upon Adjournment

Registered	Bill Number	First Name	Last Name	Position on Bill	Representing	Status	Testifying	Text of Testimony
6/10/2020 9:01	HB20-1053	Alison Friedman	Phillips	For	The Women's Foundation of Colorado	Open	Uploaded file	
6/10/2020 10:04	HB20-1053	Beth	Cashdan	For	Self	Open	Submitted text	Early Childhood education is important to our economy as it allows parents to work and increase readiness levels for children prior to starting kindergarten. There is a shortage of qualified early childhood educators and mental health workers. This bill would help more individuals to become qualified to work in early childhood programs, thus increasing available spaces for young children to enter programs.
6/9/2020 23:19	HB20-1053	Chaer	Robert	For	Skills2Compete- Colorado	Open	Uploaded file	
6/9/2020 23:24	HB20-1053	Chaer	Robert	For	Skills2Compete- Colorado	Open	Uploaded file	
6/10/2020 10:53	HB20-1053	Christina	Walker	For	Clayton Early Learning	Open	Uploaded file	

Witness Signup List

Registered	Bill Number	First Name	Last Name	Position on Bill	Representing	Status	Testifying	Text of Testimony
6/9/2020 20:27	HB20-1053	Kelli	Pfaff	For	Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative	Open	Submitted text	<p>Dear Senators,</p> <p>As the Director for the Jewish ECE Initiative, I work with a small team to help catalyze support for high quality early childhood education across 10 centers representing almost 1100 children and 275 educators. I am new to this role, after having worked in public schools for the past 18 years. It has become evident to me through conversations with educators, parents and directors of our schools, that recruitment and retention continues to be a top concern. We are collectively working to advocate for higher compensation, professionalization of the field and essential supports to help mitigate the challenges that accompany working in early childcare environments.</p> <p>As COVID-19 came upon us and all of our centers shut down, as they start to reopen to meet the demands of working parents and provide responsive learning environments for our youngest citizens, our educators are struggling. With lower enrollment numbers inevitable and a broken business model, we will inevitably lose teachers. This bill helps to elevate our educators and strengthen the entire field. I hope you will vote to support this work and send a strong message of bi-partisan support to our front line workers that are essential to our functioning democracy.</p>
6/9/2020 19:05	HB20-1053	Khatira	Amn	For	Spring Institute	Open	Uploaded file	

Witness Signup List

Registered	Bill Number	First Name	Last Name	Position on Bill	Representing	Status	Testifying	Text of Testimony
6/9/2020 18:53	HB20-1053	Michael	Cooke	For	Council for a Strong America	Open	Submitted text	<p>Dear Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Member,</p> <p>In March, business leaders of ReadyNation, a nonprofit, bipartisan network of more than 2,700 business leaders from Colorado and across the country, wrote members of the General Assembly to urge support of important workforce initiatives.</p> <p>ReadyNation, an organization of Council for a Strong America, is committed to boosting research-proven efforts to strengthen the quality of our workforce and economy, and our members support programs that help ensure that children get off to a strong start and are prepared for academic success. But without a strong early childhood care and education workforce, children, families and businesses will be directly impacted.</p> <p>One of the bills we wrote to you about was HB 20-1053, which emerged from the interim Early Childhood School Readiness Legislative Commission. The remaining provisions in this bill would streamline qualification pathways for aspiring childhood educators, thus supporting a child care system which is struggling to rebound in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Child care programs are beginning to reopen their doors, but under new social distancing requirements, providers will have to operate at enrollment levels as low as 50% of capacity, while needing 80% of their staff to comply with higher safety standards. This comes at a time when recruitment and retention was already very challenging.</p>
6/9/2020 21:41	HB20-1053	Nicole	Riehl	For	Executives Partnering to Invest in Children	Open	Uploaded file	

Witness Signup List

Registered	Bill Number	First Name	Last Name	Position on Bill	Representing	Status	Testifying	Text of Testimony
6/10/2020 11:18	HB20-1053	Sheila	Purdin	For	Temple Sinai Preschool	Open	Submitted text	<p>Dear Senators,</p> <p>I have been a dedicated early childhood educator for nearly 30 years and a program director for almost 20 years. It is my passion and I believe quality early childhood education is vital to the success of a community.</p> <p>Throughout my time in early education I have watched our workforce dwindle due to low wages, lack of benefits and prohibitive educational requirements in relationship to compensation. Simply put, early educators are not paid a living wage or provided benefits that would encourage them to pursue the field or remain in it for any length of time. We have to turn away many exceptional educators because of state group leader requirements and therefore we almost never have a full staff. Then, those that are here are burned out way to quickly carrying the load.</p> <p>I implore you to support HB 20-1053. Help ease the burden to become an early childhood educator and provide tax relief to those in the field. Our future depends on it.</p>

Witness Signup List

Registered	Bill Number	First Name	Last Name	Position on Bill	Representing	Status	Testifying	Text of Testimony
6/9/2020 19:14	HB20-1053	Shirley	Ritter	For	Self	Open	Submitted text	<p>Quality childcare programs are struggling now, but they have for some time. One of the biggest problems they face is recruiting and retaining great staff. Our children deserve the best care, especially when they are so little. This bill supports the staff and the programs that work everyday to provide great care for our youngest citizens. It allows some flexibility and it focuses attention, all without a fiscal note. Please pass this legislation for our kids!</p> <p>I have worked in the early childhood profession for over 34 years, this is where we can all make a difference for families. I've always believed this, but now I know it's more critical than ever.</p> <p>Thank you!</p>
6/10/2020 9:27	HB20-1053	Suzanne	Banning	For	Florence Crittenton	Open	Uploaded file	