



The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) – which serves as Colorado’s federally-recognized state advisory council for early childhood - has taken a key role in identifying, evaluating, and recommending policy alternatives aligned with key universal preschool design and implementation questions arising from the overwhelming passage of Proposition EE, which designates funding to support universal preschool for all children in Colorado beginning in Fall 2023. Over the past several weeks, a work group of the ECLC has met regularly to thoughtfully and intentionally consider various governance and funding allocation models, recognizing and learning from the work of the Preschool Policy Leadership Committee, Preschool Policy Advisory Group, and many others, to ultimately make a recommendation on the opportunity presented by this new funding stream.

Over the past 30 years, Colorado has made incredible advancements in supporting children and families. Community providers, school districts, family child care homes, and Family, Friend, and Neighbor have worked tirelessly to provide high quality early learning to young children. Local entities, county governments, and family and community support organizations in every part of our diverse state have provided services to help families meet their needs and ensure that children can thrive. The philanthropic community has made transformative investments in early care and learning. State agency leadership and staff have built the strong foundations from which all of these programs, services, and investments can flourish. Their hard work and dedication have provided Colorado opportunities to receive numerous federal grants, including Race To The Top/Early Learning Challenge grant, and most recently the Preschool Development Grant, which supports children birth through five to be ready for school when they enter kindergarten. In 2013, the Office of Early Childhood was created in another step toward aligning the broad scope of systems that support children holistically starting at birth. However, the complexities of serving children and families as well as the inability to fully integrate funding streams, service delivery, and data systems has led to an inequitable patchwork of access for children and families, especially for those furthest from opportunity.

To continue elevating early childhood in Colorado and build upon the successful programs and strong foundation already in place, the ECLC recommends the creation of a new single state agency dedicated to early childhood that delivers on the vision of a comprehensive early care and education system for children birth to age five.

In order for this alignment of services, programs, and funding streams to be successful, the ECLC recommends a thoughtful and strategic implementation plan be created over the next year. The ECLC is committed to assisting with this process and working closely with state agencies to create a system of seamless services for Colorado children and families, including strong transitions to K-12 educational settings. The attached document provides more details about ECLC’s recommendation.

The ECLC wishes to recognize and express sincere appreciation for the many early childhood champions who have worked tirelessly over the years to support children and families. We look forward to taking this next important step toward our vision that all children are valued, healthy and thriving.