



2012

# Legislative Impacts



Since 1985, the Colorado Children's Campaign has been the leading voice for kids at the state capitol in the areas of early childhood development and learning, K-12 education and child health policy. This year was no exception as the Children's Campaign worked with policymakers and coalition partners to ensure that in spite of election year politics and lingering budget challenges, the session was a productive one for kids at the capitol. Our legislative focuses included:



## **Ensuring Early Literacy Through Supports and Interventions (HB 1238, Hamner/Massey & Johnston/Spence)**

The Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act provides individualized and research-based interventions for struggling readers in grades K-3. The legislation ensures parents get the information and help they need to support their child. Reading at grade level by the end of third grade strongly predicts long-term academic success and early interventions allow children to catch up and keep up with their peers. The Children's Campaign worked with a broad and diverse coalition of partners to pass this legislation.



## **Studying Effective Integration of High-Quality Digital Learning in Public Schools (HB 1124, Massey & Johnston)**

The Colorado Department of Education will commission a privately funded study to research the use of technology in Colorado classrooms and explore innovative education programs. The study will explore existing online and blended learning methods (using online instruction in traditional classrooms). It will also examine which programs increase academic outcomes and what barriers exist in digital learning. We know that access to strong educational options help support all students' learning, regardless of geographic location or income.



## **Strengthening the Waiver Process for Child Care Centers (HB 1276, Duran & Newell)**

The Colorado Children's Campaign advocated for House Bill 1276 because it strengthens the waiver process for child care centers. Child care centers seeking a waiver for curriculum materials are required to provide adequate training to staff about use of the materials and ensure that parents are notified of any waivers. The bill requires the Department of Human Services to provide comprehensive information about the licensure waiver process to child care centers.



## **Finalizing Rules to Implement Educator Effectiveness Law (HB 1001, Murray/Gardner & Johnston/Spence)**

This bipartisan bill puts into law the rules crafted by the State Board of Education to implement the Great Teachers Great Leaders Act passed in 2010 (Senate Bill 10-191). The Children's Campaign supported the original policy as well as the subsequent rules, as we recognize the need for strong, consistent rules in order to implement this landmark legislation.



## **Maintaining Child Care Assistance for Working Families (SB 022, Williams & Massey)**

Under a pilot program, up to 10 counties will modify their Child Care Assistance Program to mitigate the "cliff effect," which happens when working parents lose child care assistance because they are earning more. The loss of assistance threatens their ability to continue to work when they suddenly can't afford child care. The pilot program allows counties to extend the assistance for two years after the parents exceed the eligibility limit, while gradually increasing the parent's share of child care costs until they can handle the full cost of care.





### **Protecting Education Support (HB 1345, Massey & Bacon)**

Legislators increased total K-12 spending by \$57 million, which helped mitigate cuts to public schools and maintain current levels of per-pupil support. The legislation also supports literacy technology and eliminates proposed cuts to the Counselor Corps Grant Program, which is proven to decrease high school dropout rates.



### **Repairing and Modernizing the Benefit Management System (HB 1339, Becker & Lambert)**

House Bill 1339 dedicates \$23.2 million to improve the Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS). This computer system determines Coloradans' eligibility for Medicaid, food assistance (SNAP) and Colorado Works. The system has struggled with technological problems since its inception. This legislation includes oversight and accountability to ensure the project is completed effectively, which eases the burden on at-risk families and children.



### **Joining a Multi-State Consortium to Ensure Strong Academic Assessments (HB 1240 A. Kerr & Bacon/K. King)**

Colorado will join a multi-state consortium developing common assessments for math, reading and writing. As a governing board member in the consortium, Colorado will help create and pilot the assessments and will save more than \$20 million by using the assessments developed by the consortium. The Children's Campaign supported this policy because schools will be able to compare the academic progress of Colorado kids to other students across the country by using comprehensive, rigorous assessments.



### **Ensuring High-Quality Child Care Centers (SB 138, Lundberg)**

The Colorado Children's Campaign joined a broad coalition of early childhood advocates to defeat Senate Bill 138, which would have removed all references to quality standards in child care licensing requirements and moved the authority to rewrite child care regulations from the Colorado Department of Human Services to the Governor or General Assembly.



## **Legislative Challenges and Ongoing Efforts**

### **Strengthening and Streamlining Early Childhood Services (SB 130 Newell/Hodge & Massey/Hamner)**

The Colorado Children's Campaign worked hard on this important legislation to consolidate early childhood programs from multiple state agencies into an Office of Early Childhood within the Department of Human Services in order to streamline delivery of services to young children. While the bill did not pass this year, the administration's commitment to the concept resulted in the creation of the Office of Early Childhood in the Department of Human Services which will encompass the programs and services that are currently in multiple divisions of the Department. The Children's Campaign will continue to work with partners on improving state systems serving young children in the years ahead.

### **Expanding Postsecondary Education Opportunities for All Colorado Children (SB 015, Giron/Johnston & Duran/Williams)**

The Children's Campaign supports efforts to increase access to post-secondary education for all of Colorado's kids and supported Senate Bill 015. This bill would have created a new tuition class for any undocumented high school graduate who attended a school in Colorado for the three years prior to graduation. The new tuition class would allow these students to pay in-state rates, but would not allow them to access the state College Opportunity Fund (COF) in any Colorado higher education institute that wished to participate in the program. The bill was defeated in the House Finance Committee by a close margin. We anticipate supporting similar efforts in the legislative session ahead.

### **Promoting Child Health through Medicaid Benefits for Pregnant Women (SB 108, Nicholson & Summers)**

Senate Bill 108 would have required the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to provide dental benefits to women on Medicaid during pregnancy and for two months postpartum. Unfortunately, the bipartisan bill never reached a full floor vote in the House due to procedural timing issues in the final days of the session. The Children's Campaign supported this bill because a mother's oral health is a major determinant of her child's overall health.

## **Get the Facts!**

To download or purchase a copy of the *2012 KIDS COUNT in Colorado!* or the Colorado Children's Budget 2011, go to [www.coloradokids.org/data](http://www.coloradokids.org/data)



## **Stay Informed!**

Become part of our growing network of advocates and supporters by signing up to receive our weekly legislative update, KidsFlash, and occasional action alerts at [www.coloradokids.org/action](http://www.coloradokids.org/action).

For additional information, please contact Tara Manthey at [tara@coloradokids.org](mailto:tara@coloradokids.org).

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