Written testimony as prepared for delivery in support of SB20-163 (Gonzales & Priola/Mullica) Colorado Healthy Communities Act, by Erin Miller, Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign

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Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Upon Adjournment
Room 357

- Chair Fields and members of the Committee, my name is Erin Miller and I serve as Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 163 and thank you to Senators Gonzales and Priola for bringing this critical policy forward.
- By now, you have heard that Colorado has among the easiest exemption policies and correspondingly, the lowest vaccination rates in the country, making our schools and communities vulnerable to serious diseases that can have life-threatening and life-long consequences.
- Maintaining high community vaccination rates is critical for children with special health care needs and those who cannot be vaccinated either because of conditions that compromise their immune systems, or who, like my own 8-month-old, are too young to receive all vaccinations.
- These children have the right to participate fully in their community, and their community has the responsibility to support their participation and keep them safe.
- You've also heard that data show that Colorado's childhood immunization rates for some diseases sit well below the 95 percent threshold required to protect the health of the general population.[1]
- In fact, some school districts have exemption rates ranging from 14 percent to 25 percent.[2]
- The latest data from CDC shows that as of the 2018-2019 school year, Colorado kindergarteners have the lowest vaccination rates in the nation for MMR, Chickenpox, Hepatitis B *and* Polio.

[1] Centers for Disease Control. Vaccination coverage among children aged 19–35 months, 2016
[2] Kids Count 2018

- The improvements in this bill make it more equitable for all parents making decisions about vaccinations.
- The current exemption process in Colorado makes it easier for a small group of parents to practice their beliefs than the majority of parents who follow the recommended vaccination schedule.
- And data show that parents who don't vaccinate tend to have higher incomes than average and are more likely to be white. This trend holds across education levels. And their choice means communities of color and low-income communities are carrying a disproportionate burden in creating safe and healthy communities.[3]
- This bill simply ensures a more equitable effort by all parents.
- Thank you again to Senators Gonzales and Priola. We urge your support of this critical bill.

[3] Am J Public Health. 2016 January; 106(1): 172–177. Published online 2016 January. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2015.302926