Testimony as Prepared for Delivery in support of HB23-1078: Unemployment Compensation Dependent Benefit Allowance by Sarah Barnes, Director of Family Economic Prosperity Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign

House Business Affairs and Labor Committee
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HCR 0112

- Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Sarah Barnes and I am the Director of Family Economic Prosperity Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign.
- The Colorado Children's Campaign is a non-profit, non-partisan, policy, research and advocacy organization, committed to securing every chance for every child in Colorado since our founding in 1985. That includes advocating for the economic prosperity of Colorado kids and their families.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 1078.
- After two years of pandemic-related disruptions, data show that tens of thousands of Colorado households with children still struggle to afford essentials like food, medical care and housing.
- For families with children, these necessary, daily expenses - like childcare, diapers and food - are higher.
- When a family loses employment through no fault of their own, unemployment benefits provide critical income support during times when they are searching for new employment.
- However, unemployment benefits fall short of replacing families' wages, which is particularly challenging for families with children, especially single-parent households, who often rely on every dollar of their income to make ends meet.
- Furthermore, due to a history of policies and practices that create more barriers for families of color, families of color are more likely to work in lower wage jobs, which makes access to adequate unemployment benefits even more critical when parents lose employment through no fault of their own.
- Adding a dependent allowance to unemployment benefits helps ensure that families with children have the financial support they need during times when they need to access these benefits.
- Dependent allowances also help families keep their children connected to childcare, which supports parents' ability to obtain new employment and allows children to maintain their routines and relationships to caregivers. This is critical to supporting their healthy development.
- We urge your support of HB 1078, a targeted and equitable solution to support the economic security and well-being of all Colorado children and families. Thank you.