

# 2026 Policy Priorities

Community Briefing  
January 29, 2026



COLORADO CHILDREN'S  
• CAMPAIGN •

Every day. For every kid.



# Welcome

## Heather Tritten, President & CEO





# The Campaign



## **Vision**

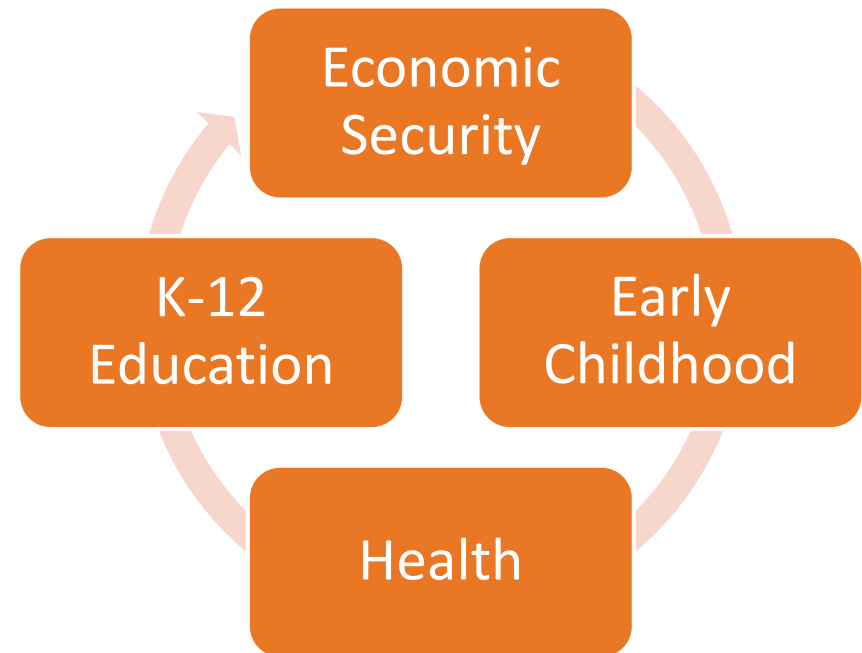
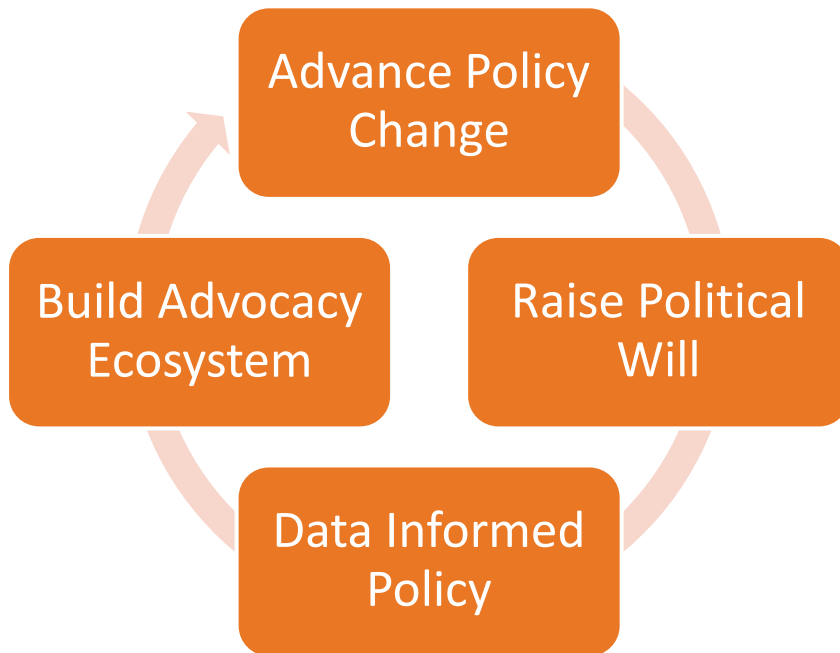
*A Colorado where all children thrive.*

## **Mission**

*We create opportunity for every child in Colorado  
by catalyzing innovative policy, research, and  
advocacy solutions.*



# The Campaign





# Negative Federal Impacts



- Federal government becoming an unreliable partner for kids
- HR1 already putting pressure on Colorado and state budgets
- Recent freeze of child care, TANF, and child welfare funding
- Broader pattern undermining children's well-being and family stability
- Temporary court stay does not resolve harm or uncertainty



# Uncertainty Here at Home

- More than \$850 million in projected state budget cuts
- Medicaid facing the greatest pressure
- Many programs benefiting kids currently protected
- Contentious session with limited political appetite for bold action





# So...What Are We Going To Do?

- Guarantee affordable, high-quality health care for every child and family.
- Modernize safety net programs to secure children's financial stability.
- Make early childhood care affordable, accessible, and effective.
- Fully fund schools and protect students with disabilities.

*"This moment demands more than pushing back on the White House; it demands leadership here at home. Colorado must chart its own path forward by building modern, flexible systems that protect kids no matter what happens in Washington." ~Heather Tritten, President & CEO*



# Health

Strengthen Affordability & Protect Access



**Toni Sarge-Director of Health Policy**



# Health in the Budget

- Responding to HR1
  - Increased state cost share & work requirements
- Governor's Medicaid Sustainability Proposal





# Make Health Coverage Affordable for All Families



- Sustain Colorado's health care affordability enterprise
- Protect OmniSalud
- Ensure affordable, consistent coverage



# Protect Coverage for Undocumented Children

- 20,000 children enrolled in Cover All Coloradans
- Coverage gains far exceeding estimates
- Governors' proposed budget includes changes to the program to maintain enrollment





# Expand Vaccine Access to Keep Kids Healthy



- Clarify vaccine guidance in Colorado
- Maintain alignment with the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Protect child health and public health
- SB26-032 Introduced!
  - Sens. Daugherty & Mullica
  - Reps. Brown & Feret



# **Economic Security**

**Modernize Family Supports & Reduce Child Poverty**



**Sarah Barnes-VP of Policy**



# Economic Security in the Budget

- Respond to federal actions
- Stabilize and modernize safety net
- Protect TANF for families





# Strengthen TANF for Families



- Stabilize TANF
- Prioritize families with the deepest need
- Fund evidence-based strategies
- Require and measure outcomes



# Protect Family Tax Credits

- Preserve tax credits that support families
- Reduce child poverty
- Deliver high returns for child well-being and state economy





# Early Childhood

Build an Affordable, Streamlined System



**Dr. Mathangi Subramanian-Director of Early  
Childhood Policy**



# Early Childhood in the Budget



- CCCAP remains underinvested
- UPK proposed additional dollars
- Local governance receives a clear funding line





- CCCAP waitlists impacting 12,000+ children
- Reduce administrative costs
- Improve equitable access to child care assistance
- Stabilize providers and strengthen early care infrastructure



# Strengthen Child Care Access Locally

- Align local early childhood governance structures
- Reduce red tape for small child care providers
- Eliminate duplicative contracts and statutory barriers
- Two Bills Introduced!  
SB26-019 & SB26-020
  - Sens. Ball & Bright
  - Rep. Sirota





# Renew the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit



- Renew a proven tool to attract private investment
- Sustain and expand child care provider ecosystem
- Increase access to affordable child care
- Strengthen local economies and workforce stability
- HB26-1004 Introduced!
  - Speaker McCluskie & ML Caldwell
  - President Coleman & ML Simpson



# **K-12 Education**

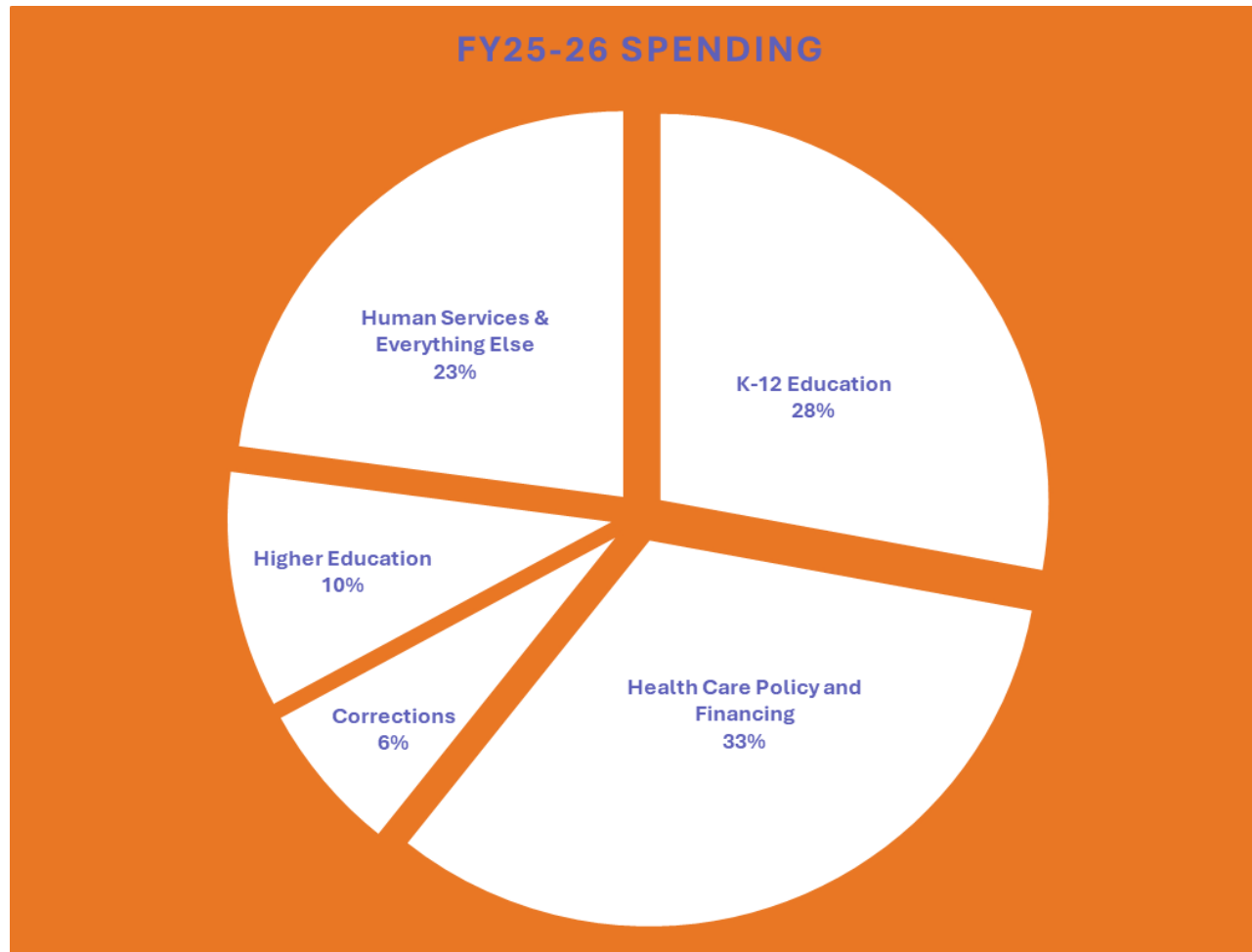
## **Deliver on Equity & Opportunity**



**Madi Ashour- Director of K-12 Education  
Policy**

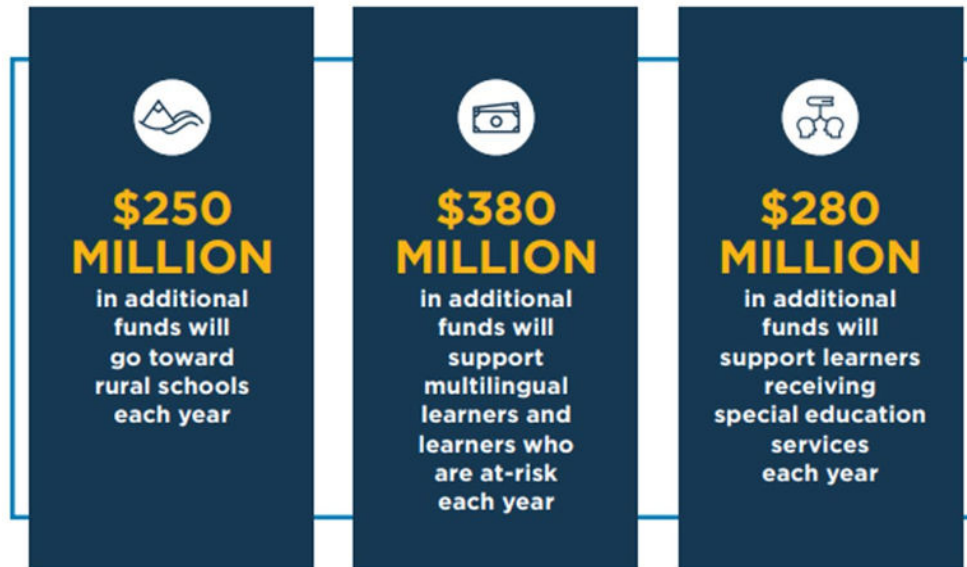


# K-12 Education in the Budget





# Fully Implement the New School Finance Formula



- Fully fund the student-centered finance formula
- Target resources to high-need student populations
- Support rural districts, English learners, and students with disabilities
- Close opportunity gaps and maximize taxpayer impact



# Stabilize Food Security Through HSMA & SNAP

- Maximize HSMA and SNAP participation and funding
- Improve student nutrition, attendance, and learning
- Reduce hunger-related barriers to achievement
- Support food security at school and at home





# Strengthen Disability Rights & Special Education Protections



- Enforce civil rights and special education protections
- Strengthen Section 504 oversight at the state level
- Address gaps left by weakened federal enforcement
- Ensure safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments



# Questions?

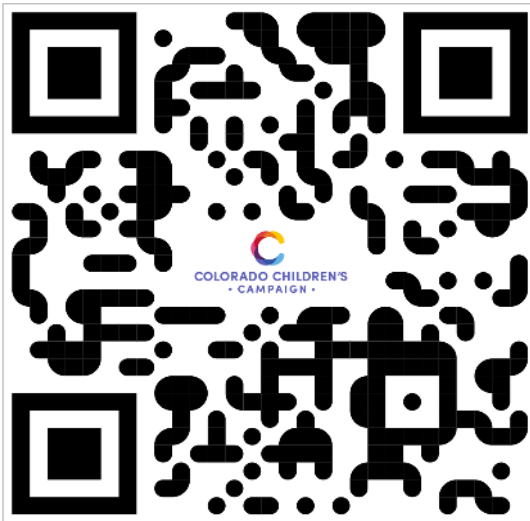


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# Stay Connected!

## Join our newsletter



## Follow us on Social



## Submit an Action Alert



Tell Congress to Release Colorado's Funding for Kids Now

**Colorado Kids, Families, and Communities Can't Afford to Lose Funding for Child Care and Child Support**

Programs that support Colorado kids and families are now in jeopardy because the federal government is targeting our state by freezing funds that support Colorado kids. Critical programs that support the basic needs of Colorado kids and families and care for Colorado's youngest kids will soon run dry unless the federal government acts immediately to unfreeze these funds.

Colorado members of Congress must demand that the federal government live up to its commitments to Colorado's kids and families.

**Take Action: Tell Colorado's representatives in Congress to urge the White House to release these critical funds.**



# Join Our Next Webinars!

## SAVE THE DATES

- **Thursday, March 19 – 10:00 AM (virtual)**
  - Mid Session Webinar
- **Thursday, May 15 – 10:00 AM (virtual)**
  - End of Session Webinar





# Join Our Upcoming Lobby Day!

Speak Up for Kids Day – Wednesday, April 8



Learn More  
Here!





**Thank you!**

