

College Credit for Work Experience (HB20-1002)

Testimony to House Education Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Tyler Jaeckel, the director of policy and research at the Bell Policy Center. The Bell Policy Center provides policymakers, advocates, and the public with reliable resources to create a practical policy agenda that promotes economic mobility for every Coloradan.

The Bell Policy Center supports [HB20-1002](#) which requires the creation, adoption, and implementation of a plan to award postsecondary credit for work-related experience and a statewide system for the guaranteed transfer of that credit between institutions of higher education.

It's estimated [74 percent of jobs in Colorado](#) require some level of postsecondary education and training, but nearly one-third of Colorado's population has no additional education or training after high school. [Only 29 percent of Latinx Coloradans and 39 percent of black Coloradans have a certificate or degree, compared to 64 percent of white Coloradans](#). The higher education attainment gap between Latinx and white Coloradans is the second largest in the nation.

The Bell has considered these equity issues through our work on two-generation policy solutions and our Future of Work and Learning Advisory Council, which is composed of current and former students of postsecondary institutions in Colorado and experts from the areas of workforce development and education.

For many of the students we have engaged, particularly student parents, providing credits for previous work experience can mean the difference between graduation and noncompletion. More than 1 in 5 undergraduate college students are parents. In meeting the demands of work, school, and child care, student parents are confronted with enormous pressures on their schedules. The amount of time needed to complete a degree, or the inflexibility of schedules, can often lead student parents to not even apply for postsecondary opportunities.

Many of these student parents already have work experience that can transfer to their degree programs. Providing credit for these previous experiences can significantly help student parents. It can:

- Reduce the time needed to finish a program, reducing costs and providing more time to work or meet the demands of parenthood
- Provide additional flexibility in designing a course load that fits their needs
- Allow these students to pursue types of degrees that otherwise may have been out of reach

We also believe that this bill will be important to the development of [stackable credential programs](#). These programs allow workforce development programs to work with community colleges and four-year institutions to develop career pathways that provide credit for work skills and previous credentials. This would allow students a clear opportunity to engage in credentials that build to larger opportunities.

We recommend this bill from Making Higher Education Attainable Interim Study Committee move forward.