

Supports for Early Childhood Educator Workforce (HB20-1053)

Testimony to the Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs

Nazia Hasan, Policy Analyst

June 10, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Nazia Hasan, policy analyst 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 [HB20-1053](#), which addresses key challenges to recruit and retain early care educators by supporting child care programs with streamlined pathways and alternative routes to the profession. Furthermore, HB20-1053 will provide mental health support and greater flexibility to Colorado's 34 early childhood councils and the Office of Early Childhood to support providers with technical assistance and coaching.

Child care serves as a vehicle to allow for Colorado's economy to function because working parents rely on child care as an essential service to maintain participation in the workforce. However, Colorado's current supply of early care educators is inadequate to meet the child care demands of Coloradan families. According to the [Center for American Progress](#), **more than half (51 percent) of Coloradans live in a child care desert**, which is a census tract with more than 50 children and no child care options.

The problems of child care access are not evenly felt.

- Access to licensed child care is even **lower for families who are Hispanic/Latino and those with low incomes**, respectively 56 and 55 percent reside in areas with child care deserts.
- **For families with younger children, the challenge to access quality child care is even greater**. According to the [Colorado Shines' 2019 Brighter Birth Through Five Needs Assessment](#), only 33 percent of families with infants have access to licensed child care.

A primary factor contributing to this shortage is the inadequate supply of qualified early care educators, which makes it difficult for directors to fill vacant positions. [Early Milestones' 2017 Workforce Survey](#) shows 87 percent of early care educators and 73 percent of family child care providers aspire to advance their education but lack the financial means and flexibility to complete credentials.

The Bell Policy Center supports HB20-1053 because it addresses challenges to educator recruitment and retention by streamlining qualifications and pathways to fill the early care and learning pipeline with qualified educators. [Reducing barriers to entry](#) and advancement in the early childhood profession, this bill simultaneously supports aspiring educators attain needed credentials and allows child care programs meet state licensing requirements so long those staff members are pursuing the needed credentials.

HB20-1053 will support child care programs continue to provide an essential service to the community by reducing burden and supporting their workforce. Streamlined pathways and additional mental health and coaching support are critical for the early care and learning industry especially during this public health crisis.

Should you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at hasan@bellpolicy.org.