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Denver to Prioritize a Strong Start for Babies and Toddlers

Leading National Groups Announce Selection of Communities across the Country to Focus on Healthy Beginnings, Supported Families and Quality Child Care from Birth to Age 3

DENVER—April 24, 2018—Leading national organizations announced today that they will work with 29 communities across the country to focus on child development from birth to age 3. Denver is excited to be one of these targeted communities. Research shows investments in the first three years of life, when a child’s brain develops faster than at any other time period, are most critical in helping children become more confident, empathetic, contributing members of their communities.

The National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), National Institute for Children’s Health Quality (NICHQ) and StriveTogether each selected community partners that are demonstrating a commitment to ensuring children have a strong start in life. The partnership is funded by the Pritzker Children’s Initiative (PCI), a project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. The Sorenson Impact Center, housed at the University of Utah’s David Eccles School of Business is working with PCI and the partner organizations to manage the initiative.

The communities named in today’s announcement include:

National Association of Counties

- Boone County, Missouri
- Champaign County, Illinois
- Dauphin County, Pennsylvania
- Pierce County, Washington
- Ramsey County, Minnesota
- Washington County, Virginia
- Watauga County, North Carolina
- Tarrant County, Texas

- Kent County, Michigan
- Multnomah County, Oregon
- Orange County, California
- Onondaga County, New York
- Ventura County, California
- Volusia and Flagler Counties, Florida

Center for the Study of Social Policy

- Boston, Massachusetts
- Denver, Colorado
- Guilford County, North Carolina
- Los Angeles County, California

National League of Cities

- Austin, Texas
- Baltimore, Maryland
- Chattanooga, Tennessee

- Cleveland, Ohio
- Denver, Colorado
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Memphis, Tennessee
- Norwalk, Connecticut
- Salt Lake City, Utah
- Spartanburg County, South Carolina
- Tucson, Arizona

National Institute for Children’s Health Quality (NICHQ) and StriveTogether

“This announcement marks an unprecedented moment in our nation’s commitment to our youngest learners. For the first time, communities across the country will work together to take action to increase high-quality services for children from birth to age 3 toward a common goal of kindergarten readiness,” said Janet Froetscher, president of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. “The communities will support a strong start for babies and toddlers through local solutions: giving children a healthy start at birth, strengthening support for families with infants and toddlers and expanding high-quality care and learning environments.”

The selected communities will launch the initiative in partnership with national organizations supporting the effort. Partner organizations will equip communities with tools to strengthen early childhood systems and share best practices with other cities, counties and states. In turn, communities will share resources that will drive policies and make the case for public and private investment in core services for infants and toddlers.

Leading the initiative in Denver will be [Denver’s Early Childhood Council](#), a member of the Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Communities (EC LINC) network convened by CSSP. The Council leverages resources, opportunities and connections to create a quality system that positively impacts the lives of children and their families. A specific focus of the community is to increase access to high quality, affordable child care in high-need communities and identified child care deserts within Denver.

Additionally, the Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs will be leading the National League of Cities PN-3 Cohort work as a part of the Road to Reading initiative.

Frank Farrow, president, Center for the Study of Social Policy said, “The Center for the Study of Social Policy is pleased to announce that ten EC-LINC communities will be participating in the Pritzker Children’s Initiative, a specialized effort to make sure young children are developmentally on track for school by age three. EC-LINC (Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Communities) has made significant strides in advancing early childhood systems by promoting peer learning, innovation, results-based action and equity for all. Thanks to generous support from PCI, participating communities will tackle the toughest challenges related to maternal and child health, family support and early care and education. They will develop models for how communities across the country can work to create brighter futures for the youngest children and their families.”

The needs of infants and toddlers cannot all be addressed with a one-size-fits-all approach. As part of this joint initiative, local leaders will pursue a variety of interlocking strategies in the child care, health, early childhood education and human services domains that promote and work toward the well-being of young children. These integrated approaches will build on promising existing community-driven efforts and work to address new challenges as they aim to provide parents with unique tools, information and guidance at a time when many feel most overwhelmed.

“These communities will be at the forefront of developing public policy and practice that embraces the new knowledge we have about brain science. We now know that waiting to invest in our children — our nation’s future — until kindergarten or even pre-K is too late,” said Rachel Schumacher, director of PCI. “By bringing communities together around shared goals and outcome measures, we can move the needle to set our nation’s babies and toddlers up for success.”

Research shows that investments in children and their families in the earliest years help communities create better education, health, social and economic outcomes that increase revenue and reduce the need for costly, less effective interventions later in life. With an estimated 3 million of the nation’s youngest children at risk of reaching kindergarten not ready to learn, this Initiative seeks a dramatic investment in improving kindergarten readiness.

In addition to the economic benefits, high-quality early childhood development programs can reduce chronic disease and health care costs, and their benefits include better education outcomes and higher incomes as adults. Early childhood development lays the foundation for school readiness with social-emotional skills that children need to do well both in and out of school, including attentiveness, persistence, impulse control and sociability.

About the Partners

Center for the Study of Social Policy

The [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) (CSSP) is a national, nonprofit public policy, research and technical assistance organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in New York City and Los Angeles. CSSP is committed to securing equitable opportunities and optimal outcomes for children and families. CSSP strives to achieve this by focusing on the families facing the most significant barriers – including families living in poverty and those whose lives are affected by discrimination based on race, immigration status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

National Association of Counties

The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) unites America’s 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public’s understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service.

National Institute for Children’s Health Quality (NICHQ)

The [National Institute for Children’s Health Quality \(NICHQ\)](#) is a mission-driven nonprofit dedicated to driving sustainable improvements in the complex issues facing children’s health. We provide deep expertise in developing the pathways and partnerships for catalyzing change to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

National League of Cities

The [National League of Cities \(NLC\)](#) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. Working in partnership with the 49 state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 19,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. The Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within NLC that helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth and families in their communities.

Sorenson Impact Center

The [Sorenson Impact Center](#), housed at the University of Utah’s David Eccles School of Business, is a think-and-

do tank that marshals capital for social good, empowers data-driven programs, breaks down silos across sectors, and equips the next generation of leaders with social purpose.

StriveTogether

[StriveTogether](#) leads a national movement of 70 communities to get better results in every child's life. We coach and connect partners across the country to close gaps, especially for children of color and low-income children. Communities using our proven approach have seen measurable gains in kindergarten readiness, academic achievement and postsecondary success. The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network reaches 10.4 million students, involves 10,800 organizations and has partners in 30 states and Washington, D.C.

Pritzker Children's Initiative

For more than 15 years, [the Pritzker Children's Initiative](#) (PCI) has been committed to a single, attainable goal: that all of our nation's at-risk children will have access to high-quality early childhood development resources, increasing their likelihood of success in school and life. With a focus on the importance of ages birth to three, PCI supports initiatives that unlock public and private investments in early childhood development, increase the supply and reach of evidence-based interventions and accelerate innovation and knowledge sharing.

About Denver's Early Childhood Council

[Denver's Early Childhood Council](#) is a nonprofit, 501©3 organization, serving as Denver's early childhood hub leveraging resources, opportunities and connections to create a quality system that impacts the lives of children and their families.

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