Dear Friends,

I am happy to share an update of our work over the last year of Denver’s Early Childhood Council with you. We have emerged from the last year re-energized and invigorated by some significant changes.

Denver’s Early Childhood Council has a long history in our city. It’s hard to believe it’s been 25 years since the Joint Council for early childhood education was convened here in Denver by Mayor Wellington Webb and Denver Public Schools Superintendent Evie Dennis.

There have been many significant partners and milestones along this path, including the creation of early childhood councils as a statewide network in 2007, and the growth in our early childhood systems and quality improvement work that led to the Council launching as a nonprofit in 2011.

This year, our structure changed in response to new rules for Early Childhood Councils (ECC). To comply with both ECC and Nonprofit Act statutes, Denver’s Early Childhood Council amended our bylaws on May 4, 2017 to form a new ECC Rules Oversight Council, consisting of key stakeholders across all domains of early childhood and school readiness. The new Oversight Council has since developed a charter and has elected a Chair and Vice-Chair who also serve on our Board of Directors and act as liaisons for their work in meeting the requirements of the new rules.

We are excited to welcome these new members to our team and to take the opportunity to recognize a few of our founding board members who have changed roles and whose passion, vision and drive have contributed to the success of our organization. In June we held a celebration to extend gratitude to all our founding board members, as well as the current board members, funders, supporters and network partners that have followed them as we look forward to our continued work to ensure every young child in Denver enters school ready to succeed.

Some milestones:

• Denver was the first county to achieve the state Office of Early Childhood’s goal of over 60% Level 2 and above participation in Colorado Shines.
• 65% of Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) children in Denver are enrolled in high quality programs.
• LAUNCH Together has taken off and is convening in southwest Denver to create social-emotional and mental health supports for communities.

The end of the fiscal year in June also marked the end of the Early Learning Challenge/Race to the Top grant initiative here in Colorado. This important funding was utilized to launch several new state early childhood systems, including Colorado Shines and the professional development registry.

The Council is heading into the final year of our current strategic plan. We are considering many elements as we engage with staff, board, oversight council, and systems partners to identify opportunities and challenges in the next few years. You can expect to see our organization continue to innovate and adjust as we navigate changes in our local and national funding landscape and policy environment. As always, we appreciate your support and welcome your input on our work supporting young children and their families here in Denver.

Sincerely,

Emily Bustos, Executive Director
As the outgoing, founding Chair of Denver’s Early Childhood Council, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all who have been on the journey to develop the Council as a strong advocate for Denver families. Special thanks to the pioneers on the Board, Anna Jo Haynes and Cheryl Caldwell, who have been at the forefront shaping the evolution of early childhood education.

Over the past year, the Board continued to be heavily engaged in policy and programming to ensure the highest quality of service to the children we serve. We have been at the table with policy makers and have established strong partnerships with child care programs and City and State representatives.

The work of the Council is defined by the pace of community needs and our ability to fill the gaps to ensure that quality services and resources are available for all. We have increased our capacity by hiring a diverse staff to assist our families, and have engaged numerous agencies in navigating the complex systems that change every day.

Our strategic plan developed for 2015-2018 has effectively guided Board and staff efforts with clear goals measured each year against our actions. I’m proud of how dedicated we have been to on-going successes.

One of the last tasks of my term was for the Board to meet a new requirement established by the State and create an Oversight Council. The Oversight Council was formed to meet Early Childhood Council (ECC) rules requirements pursuant to 26-6.5-104, C.R.S., and to assure that all work contracted to Denver’s Early Childhood Council by the Colorado Department of Human Services Office of Early Childhood is executed in alignment with the ECC Rules and the Council’s Strategic Plan. This process was completed in May 2017 and six board members moved into new roles as Oversight Council committee members. My new journey will be to shepherd the Oversight Council as its Chair. I am looking forward to taking on this new challenge.

In closing, once again, thank you to the past and present Board members and staff. This has been an awesome experience for me from many different perspectives, representing Early Childhood professionals and people of color as an African American woman and as a community advocate. I’m looking forward to the future!

Sincerely,

Gerie Grimes, Ph.D (ABD)
Chair, Board of Directors
Denver’s Early Childhood Council serves as the resource and referral agency for approximately 450 licensed child care centers and licensed family homes that provide care and education to services to over 25,000 children throughout the City & County of Denver*

**Quality Initiatives:**
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program Quality Improvement (CCCAP QI)
- Denver Preschool Program (DPP)
- Infant & Toddler Quality & Availability (ITQA)
- Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT)
- School Readiness Quality Improvement Program (SRQIP)

By participating in these initiatives, child care programs receive targeted coaching, training, qualified classroom learning materials and technology resources to improve their practice and enhance the quality of their learning environments.

Part of our investment in early childhood is time. In 2016-17, the Council coordinated, and in partnership with Clayton Early Learning, delivered over 4300 hours of on-site coaching to support best practices and new skill building for early learning professionals across Denver.

The Council also managed over $2.5 million in funding to participating child care programs, enhancing quality and increasing capacity in workforce development and learning environments.

*Source: Salesforce/Colorado Shines

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**Quality Investments**
Over $2.5 million invested to enhance program quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Funds Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Environment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce &amp; Professional Development</td>
<td>$252,184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Breakdown of the Learning Environment**

**Coaching Hours**
Over 4,326 hours of coaching time invested in child care programs*

*2795 coaching hours performed by Clayton Early Learning

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“I would like to give my appreciation to Denver’s Early Childhood Council. They have been instrumental in the quality improvement of our center. They have helped supply us with Teaching Strategies and the tools we need for implementation. I cannot thank them enough for their support.”

— Tamara James
Director, Smarty Pants Academy, a Colorado Shines Quality Rated Program
Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant

June 30, 2017 marked the end of the 4-year Federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant (RTT). RTT in Colorado was designed to support programs through the new Level 1 through 5 Colorado Shines quality rating system (QRIS) via coaching, “navigation” support and grant funds for learning materials and professional development training. In 2016-17, 197 Denver programs earned a Level 3, 4 or 5 — that’s 46% of participating programs achieving a high-quality rating, with 63% percent of programs participating at a Level 2 or higher.**

In March 2017, Denver was the first county to achieve and surpass the Colorado Office of Early Childhood’s goal of 60% engagement. This meant that 262 of 433 eligible licensed child care programs reached a Level 2 or above in Colorado Shines.

Early Education Roundtable

In August of 2016, we were honored to co-host, along with the Colorado Office of Early Childhood, an Early Education Roundtable with US Department of Education Secretary Dr. John B. King, Jr. and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Policy and Early Learning Libby Doggett. Secretary King attended the roundtable discussion and a press conference in our office spaces and highlighted the successful public-private partnership between Denver’s Early Childhood Council and the state of Colorado on developing the ecConnect quality data system, among other notable achievements.

Local and state leaders, along with child care center directors, reported on the challenges and gains made in quality through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant.

** Indicates programs began the process of pursuing a rating and achieved a Level 2 or higher

Colorado Shines Progress

Comparative Colorado Shines Levels in Denver’s Early Learning Programs

“Denver’s Early Childhood Council is a great resource, and has provided funds for needed materials and quality coaching to the center, children, parents/guardians and teachers.”

— David Freyta, El Mundo Feliz, a Colorado Shines Quality Rated Program
Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)

A majority of Denver child care programs (75%) are serving populations of at-risk children from low-income families, many of whom are also enrolled in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). CCCAP provides financial assistance to help qualifying families afford full- and part-time child care. Because the reimbursement rates for CCCAP children are far below the true cost of high quality care, the grant funds and resources made available through the Quality Initiatives make a significant difference in the ability of programs to increase their quality and provide the very best experiences for children.

As of the close of 2016-17, Denver had the highest percentage of high quality child care programs in the state.

- 46% of Denver child care centers rated at Level 3 or above.
- 43% of CCCAP children across Colorado are enrolled in Level 3 or above programs.
- Denver programs claim 65% of that enrollment.

Career Pathways

The Council’s Career Pathways programs are centered on supporting the people that teach and care for young children, expanding access to high quality training, providing professional development on industry best-practices and evidence-based curriculum, and helping early childhood professionals increase their knowledge and apply it in the classroom. Career Pathways offerings are often paired with on-site coaching that enhances the application and effectiveness of the delivered content. The Council braids funding to offer community slots to family home care providers, teachers and directors/administrators.

We expanded our program this year to target Spanish-speaking family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers, by providing two learning communities delivering 45 hours of content tailored to this audience, with 30 individuals participating for the full cohort.

In late 2016, the Council began taking an administrative and leadership role in the Denver Child Care Task Force. The Task Force was founded to give Denver child care programs a voice in the community and an opportunity to meet and connect with Denver Human Services Child Care Assistance Program staff.

For almost 24 years, this group has convened to help shape and advise policy and funding issues that affect large and small child care centers in the Denver metro area. The group, now called the Denver CCAP Collaborative*, meets monthly and includes participants from large child care centers, community funders and representatives from Denver Human Services.

In June of 2017, along with our partners at Denver Human Services, we hosted our 3rd annual series of Denver CCAP Forums where providers gave helpful peer tips and input on how to support the best possible service for CCAP families. With changes coming to the attendance tracking system, ongoing communications and technical assistance will continue to play a part in our support to child care programs.

*The City & County of Denver refers to the Child Care Assistance Program locally as Denver CCAP, hence the first C is omitted in the acronym in this case.
Offering a Variety of Training Structures

We provided 1080 hours of training to over 750 individuals. Through our Resource & Referral program, the Council provided answers to over 150 early childhood related questions from providers via our Help Desk.

Pyramid Plus Approach with Arabic Interpretation

We offered the full Pyramid Plus Approach* training with simultaneous interpretation and key materials translated into Arabic. 15 individuals participated, and 11 graduated with a full completion certificate.

*Pyramid Plus promotes social and emotional development and inclusion of all children 0-5 by enhancing professional competencies.

Reaching Diverse Audiences

Breakdown of Primary Roles

Hours by Language

Hours by Workforce Competency Domain
Highlights

Early Childhood Career Pathways Fair, Fall 2016
16 participating organizations, representing Mental Health & Well-being, Family Support, Early Education & Learning, and Policy & Systems Building, and more than 40 career explorers took part.

Recognizing Excellence in Early Childhood Awards Gala, Spring 2017
• Level 4 and 5 Colorado Shines programs were recognized
• Over 30 individuals and teams were honored in 25 categories at this event, joined by colleagues, friends and family members.

Pre-Licensing Spanish Curriculum Approved
Pre-Licensing Spanish Curriculum and Trainer of Record were officially approved by the Colorado Department of Human Services. Denver is now one of two counties in Colorado offering this training in Spanish.

Looking Forward…
Even with significant changes in state funding for 2017-18, the Council has plans to continue offering high quality training to child care professionals through a fee-based training model. This will be possible due to an extensive update to the registration system that will streamline payment and registration processes. The Career Pathways team will be creating training materials so other Councils across the state can access this new and improved training registration system.

In addition, we will be pursuing other fee-based professional services to support and strengthen the early childhood workforce, such as customized coaching, observation, project consulting, and certified services such as car seat safety, NAEYC accreditation support, and playground safety.

Systems Building, Health & Well-Being

Denver's Early Childhood Council is tasked with creating a seamless early childhood system that improves access to high quality services for all children. Serving as Denver’s early childhood hub, our goal is to make connections between services, resources and professionals on behalf of families and children, elevating the quality of child care and early learning experiences. Here are some of the ways we made connections this year.

LAUNCH Together
Denver’s Early Childhood Council was awarded a $2 million, 4-year grant focused on building a coordinated system of community supports around the social-emotional development of young children birth to 5, in response to high numbers of young children getting suspended or expelled from child care programs.

LAUNCH Together is funded through a unique and innovative collaboration between eight Colorado-based foundations and is led by Early Milestones Colorado. The work is focused in Southwest Denver with the mission of building a resilient, trauma-informed community network of parents, service providers, and programs who are responsive to the social-emotional needs of young children, their families, and those who work with them.
The three key goal areas:
1. Responsive systems & services
2. Reflective organizations & workforce
3. Resilient families & neighborhoods

We're working on these goals with pediatricians, home visitors, early childhood educators, mental health professionals and other service providers who work with children in SW Denver, along with community leaders and families to meet these key deliverables:
- Mental health supports in early childhood settings
- Enhanced home visiting services
- Integrating early childhood behavioral health into pediatric care
- Family strengthening and parent education
- Screening and assessment

In our first year, over 250 early childhood professionals and community members participated in a series of trainings on Conscious Discipline®, a model that teaches adults to recognize that “every behavior is a communication” from a young child and how to respond to challenging behaviors using a reflective, positive approach to discipline. We also launched a 10-week parenting education course in Spanish, called Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors), an evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents with children ages 0-5. 15–20 parents have been in attendance each week. We look forward to expanding additional mental health supports in the community in 2018!

Denver’s Early Learning & Health Institute (DELHI)

The Council’s 5th annual DELHI was themed around Cultivating the Next Generation of Early Childhood Leaders. Keynote speaker Juana Bordas shared her wealth of experience in leadership, diversity and organizational change along with words of encouragement for a new generation of multi-cultural leaders. Over 100 guests attended from across sectors.

Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference (RMECC)

Co-hosted by Denver’s Early Childhood Council, Early Childhood Colorado Leadership Alliance, and Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children, RMECC 2017 boasted attendance of over 2400 early childhood professionals, speakers, volunteers and guests from 19 states and 3 countries. The Keynotes: Holly Elissa Bruno, MA, JD spoke about using neuroscience research on the adult brain to prevent and manage conflict, and leading science engagement influencer Steve Spangler presented on using ordinary moments to create unforgettable learning experiences. Plans are under way for creating another great conference in 2018!

Expanding our Reach with Families

This year, the Council increased our participation at family-centered events and resource fairs throughout Denver, sharing child care resources and the Colorado Early Learning & Development Guidelines in both English and Spanish with over 400 families at 15 unique events.

Recognizing the need for increased engagement with our network of child care programs serving primarily Spanish-speaking families and/or monolingual family, friend and neighbor care providers, we launched a fully translated version of our website in June 2017. We also employ several bilingual staff, and continue to offer more trainings and extensive communications in Spanish.
Transparency, accountability and good governance are key to maintaining a thriving organization. Our original 1023 501(c)(3) tax exemption application, most recent Form 990s, and audited financial statements are available on our website at denverearlychildhood.org/about/governance.

2016-2017 Financial Overview

Total Revenue Available for Use in 2016-17
$4.09 million

Total Current Year Expenses
$3.9 million

Additions to Operating Reserve
$35,000

Please donate to Denver’s Early Childhood Council to help us continue our great work and maintain a strong financial foundation!
Visit coloradogives.org/denverearlychildhoodcouncil/overview to donate and learn more.

A Quick Ratio is a strong indicator of a nonprofit's ability to pay current liabilities with current assets. We pay close attention to this ratio given that 81% of our current year funding comes from reimbursable government grants, which require us to obligate the funds prior to requesting reimbursement. A Quick Ratio of more than 1 means that we can pay current liabilities with current assets.

Less than 5% of expenses are related to administration or fundraising under Core Mission Support.
Our Staff

Leadership
Emily Bustos — Executive Director
Sharon Keiser — Director of Finance & Operations
Nicole Riehl — Director of Programs & Development

Operations
Heidi Ganser Lang — Operations & Events Coordinator
Liz Isaacson — Senior Staff Accountant
Margaret Scruggs — AP & Quality Assurance Specialist

Systems Building
Jenna Bannon — Director of Health & Well-Being
Adey Dimalanta — Health & Well-Being Specialist
Cami Harris — Communications Coordinator
Jamie Mack — AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer & Outreach Specialist

Quality Initiatives
Kelly Bowes — Senior Manager of Professional Services
Yessenia Cano — Quality Navigator
Lalania Carrillo — Lead Quality Navigator
Chinazo Dumas — Quality Outreach Specialist
Dora Esparza — Business Leadership Specialist
Soren Gall — Infant, Toddler & Family Specialist
Grisel Garcia — Quality Navigator
Susan Kay — Quality Specialist
Luisa Lemus — Quality Specialist
Demetria Martinez — Denver Preschool Program Coordinator
Caroline Ponce-Wortmann — Quality Initiatives Manager
Jill Rocha — Quality Specialist
Elizabeth Williams — Quality Navigator
Maureen Woods — Director of Quality Initiatives

Career Pathways
Erin Gager — Manager of Career Pathways
Flor Marquez — Community Engagement Coordinator
Melanie Soneson — Career Pathways Assistant

Our Board

Gerie Grimes — Board Chairperson; President & CEO, Hope Center
Pamela Harris, Ph.D. — Board Vice-Chair; President & CEO, Mile High Early Learning Centers
Sarah Brenkert — Board Secretary; Senior Director of Education and Evaluation, The Children’s Museum of Denver at Marsico Campus
Molly Vaughan — Board Treasurer; Chief Financial Officer, Worth Interiors
Scott Burns — Manager, Education Partnerships, Discovery Education
Cheryl Caldwell — Director of Early Education, Denver Public Schools
Cynthia Thomas, Ph.D. — Director of Clinical Services, Child and Family/Licensed Psychologist, Mental Health Center of Denver
Diana Gadison — Director, Early Success Academy
Anna Jo Haynes — Co-Chair, Early Childhood Leadership Commission
Malinda E. Jones, Ed.D.; Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, Metropolitan State University of Denver
Susan Kotarba — Director of Neighborhood Services, Denver Public Library
Jennifer Laughlin, CPA, CGMA — Chief Financial Officer, Altia
Mitch McKee — Deputy Executive Director, Human Services, City and County of Denver
Antonio Parés — Education Policy Director, Office of Children’s Affairs, City and County of Denver
Lisa Roy, Ed. D. — Executive Director, Early Education, Denver Public Schools
Kathryn Santoro — Vice President, Assistant General Counsel, Janus Capital Group
With gratitude

Denver’s Early Childhood Council greatly appreciates the support of following contributors during the 2016-2017 year:

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- Buell Foundation
- Colorado Department of Education
- Colorado Department of Human Services
- Community First Foundation
- Community Shares of Colorado
- Denver Department of Human Services
- Denver Preschool Program
- Denver Public Library
- DST Systems Matching Gift Program
- Early Childhood Colorado Partnership
- Early Learning Ventures
- I. A. O’Shaughnessy Foundation
- Kaplan Early Learning Company
- Lakeshore Learning
- Liberty Mutual — Give with Liberty Match
- Mile High Early Learning
- Mile High United Way
- The Piton Foundation at Gary Community Investments
- Qualistar Colorado
- Raymond James
- Rose Community Foundation

**LAUNCH Together Funders**
- The Ben and Lucy Ana Walton Fund of the Walton Family Foundation
- Buell Foundation
- Caring for Colorado Foundation
- The Colorado Health Foundation
- Community First Foundation
- Early Milestones Colorado
- Kaiser Permanente Colorado
- The Piton Foundation at Gary Community Investments
- Rose Community Foundation

**Individual Donors**
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