



Presentation to Joint HHS Committees, January 12, 2009

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. We are glad to see those of you who we have worked with in the past and look forward to getting to know those of you who are new to the legislature.
- My name is Tara Trujillo. I'm the Director of Healthy Families Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign.
- The Colorado Children's Campaign is a non-profit 501 c3 that has been around for 23 years, advocating on behalf of Colorado's most vulnerable, low-income and at-risk children.
- We are a non partisan child advocacy organization that focuses on K-12 education, early childhood, children's health and family supports and fiscal reform for our state.
- We have a policy expert for each of our areas, a full time lobbyist, a research arm and a communications and advancement team.
- We follow policy through the legislative process and the rule making process as well.
- We base our policy recommendation and positions on solid data and while our mission is to create hope and opportunity for more than 1.2 million children in Colorado, we prioritize increasing access to opportunities to our most vulnerable children.
- We do not provide direct services to children and families, but use our statewide network, It's About Kids and our community partnerships to inform our work.
- Resources we have available:
  - Comprehensive facts and resources on child well-being by county and school district
  - Presentations
  - Meeting space, etc
  - We are also the organization that produces the annual KidsCount in Colorado book and we produce multiple publications on policy and research on children each year.

As the Healthy Families Director, my work centers on children's health and well-being as it is affected by their incomes, insurance status, environment and resources.

As such, we have worked with you to make CHP+ and Medicaid health insurance more comprehensive and more available for our most vulnerable kids and parents. As a result, our state statutes now allow Colorado to cover children up to 250% of the federal poverty level and our CHP+ mental health benefit package is better suited for the degree of service that children need. We worked with you to reduce barriers to accessing services by simplifying processes for families applying for public programs. As a result, families no longer have to provide much unnecessary and burdensome documentation.

We also work to ensure that children have every opportunity to grow up healthy and strong. We have partnered with you to develop coordinated school health so that more schools are prepared to provide needed physical activity, nutrition, mental health and health education have the resources and supports to do so. We continue to look for opportunities to make Colorado's schools healthy places for children to grow and learn.

Finally, we continue to research and recommend options for improving the child welfare system in our state so that children are protected and families are strengthened.

CCC is represented on multiple statutory task forces and committees, including the 211 Children's Health Advisory Committee, the Vaccine Advisory Committee for Colorado, the Child Welfare Action Committee and many others. Additionally, we are a lead organization in the 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative and work in many local, state and national advocacy collaboratives and partnerships. I am pleased to offer the Colorado Children's Campaign as a resource to you.

Please feel free to contact us at any time.

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## COLORADO CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN

### Who We Are

The Colorado Children's Campaign is creating hope and opportunity in Colorado, one million kids at a time. We are the leading voice behind initiatives and policies that protect and provide for the 1.2 million children in Colorado, including those most at-risk. The effects of our work are seen every day when low-income children receive health and dental care, when at-risk youth escape from the streets into structured, caring community centers, and when quality schools ensure that every child has an education that opens the doors to the future. Our efforts are focused on four key issues:

- ★ Early Childhood Care and Education
- ★ K-12 Education
- ★ Child Health
- ★ Youth Development

### What We Do

Through data-driven advocacy, we influence decision makers at the state and local level and encourage them to invest in programs that benefit children. We leverage the private dollars we raise to ensure that public funds are used effectively in the support of at-risk children. For every \$1 we spend on public engagement and advocacy, at least \$10 of public money is channeled to direct service programs for children. We make the voice of children heard throughout the state because we:

- ★ Represent the needs of children at the state capitol without self-interest
- ★ Build public awareness about key issues
- ★ Gather and analyze data to support local needs and impact legislative decisions
- ★ Develop coalitions of diverse groups and help them create a shared vision
- ★ Incubate and drive new direct-service programs

### When We Started

The Colorado Children's Campaign was established in 1985 as a statewide nonprofit organization. For more than 20 years we have been the leading bi-partisan advocate for children. Our sole mission is to improve the lives of our state's youngest citizens.

### Where We Are Going

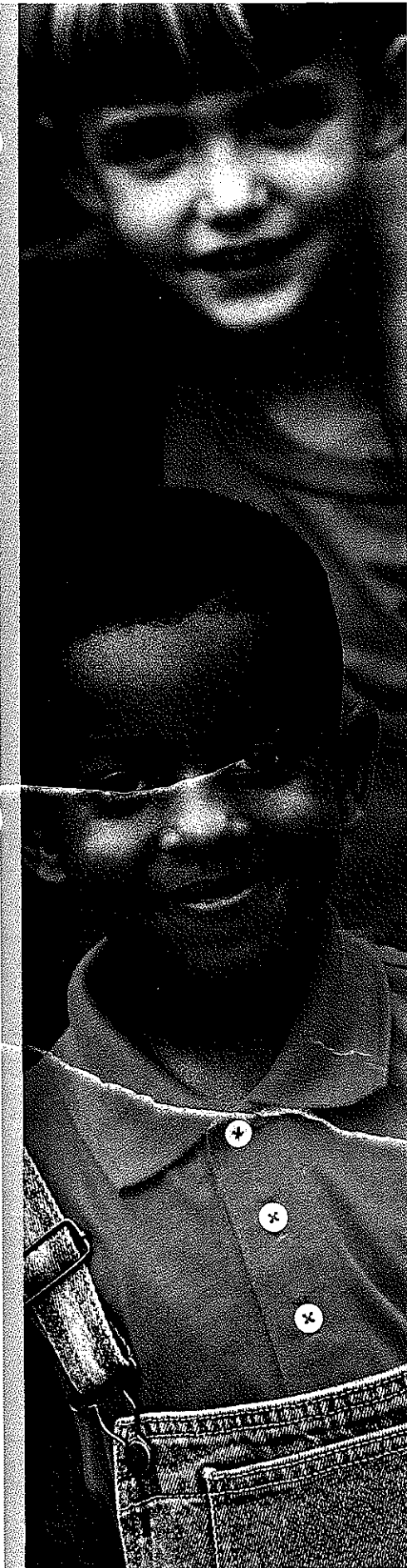
With 20 years of history behind us, we are now preparing for the next 20 years of fending for kids. The need for children's champions has never been greater. With over 180,000 of our state's young people living below the federal poverty level (\$17,600 a year for a family of three) and with budget cuts threatening programs that provide for their health, education, and safety, we must continue to lead the fight for kids.

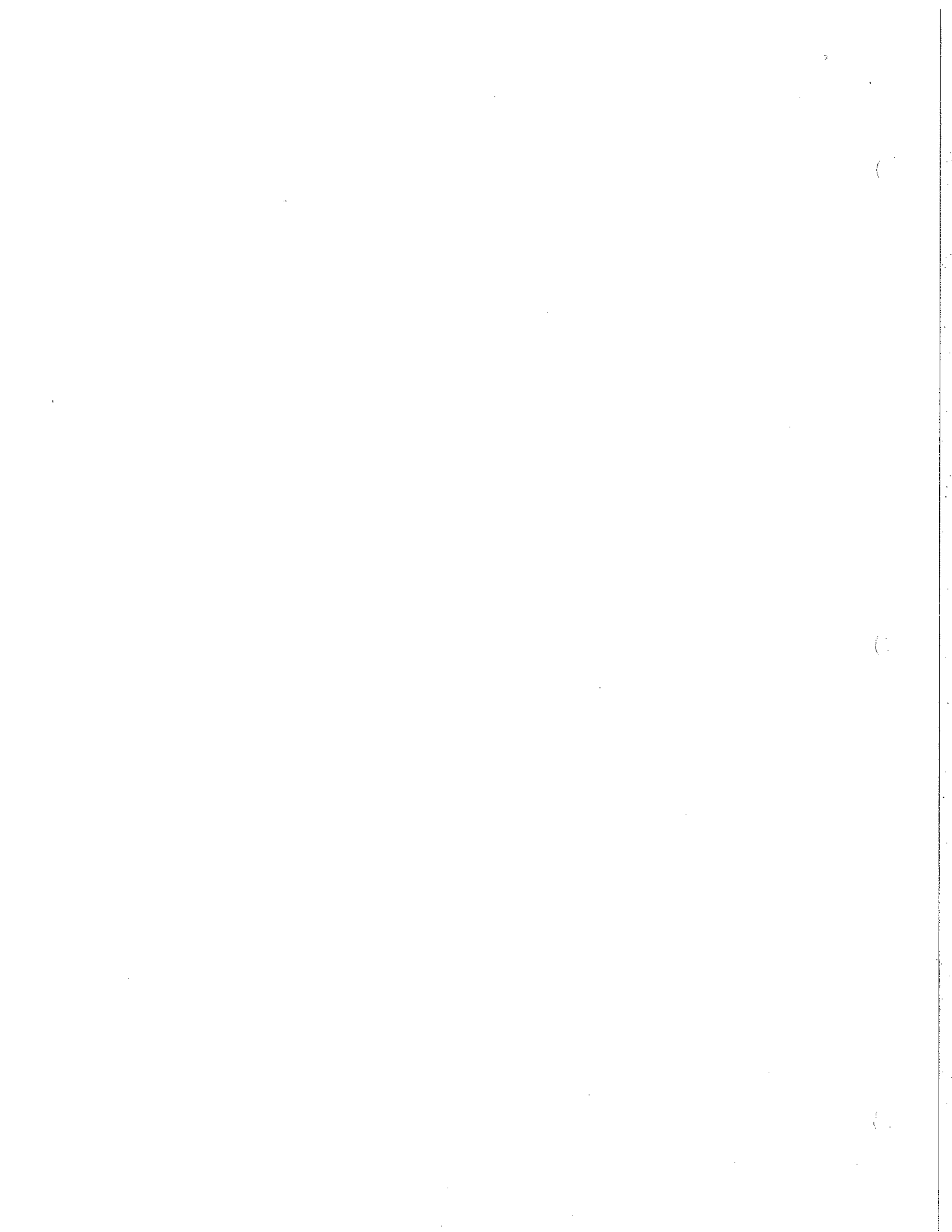
### Why We Need Your Help

The Colorado Children's Campaign is supported almost entirely by private dollars. We are the trusted leader on children's issues because of our independence, our evidence based proposals, and our connections with grassroots organizations. It is the financial support of private individuals and organizations that will continue to make the work we do possible.

*Creating Hope and Opportunity in Colorado,  
One Million Kids at a Time.*

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## COLORADO CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN

# 2008 Legislative Impacts

2008 was an important year for children at the state capitol. As a result of policies advocated for by the Colorado Children's Campaign and our partners, children in Colorado will have increased access to quality health care, education and early life experiences. Among the legislative policies supported by our data and advocacy efforts:

- ✓ **Expansion of the Colorado Preschool Program and full-day kindergarten**  
Working with partners, the Colorado Preschool Program was expanded by the addition of 6,254 new slots to serve three and four year olds (nearly \$21 million in new funding), and nearly \$32 million of new funding was committed to expand full-day kindergarten around the state.
- ✓ **Support for public school facilities improvements**  
The BEST (Building Excellent Schools Today) measure will provide significant funding and support for school districts that are not able to meet the most basic health and safety standards in their public school facilities.
- ✓ **Improved access to quality health care for thousands of children**  
As a leader in the 2010 Cover All Kids Coalition, the Children's Campaign was instrumental in the expansion of eligibility in the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) program to 225 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and removal of barriers to enrollment in the program. By supporting family friendly measures, more children can be continuously covered in the CHP+ and Medicaid Programs.
- ✓ **Improved health and nutrition standards**  
By supporting passage of a measure that requires school districts to set a minimum nutritional standard for beverages sold outside of already-regulated meal programs, including vending machines, the Children's Campaign continued its work to improve child health and nutrition and fight childhood obesity.
- ✓ **Reauthorization of the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit**  
Reauthorization of this important law, which was set to expire next year, will ensure continued incentives to taxpayers to support early childhood programs and essential resources for continuing these critical services.
- ✓ **More accurate data on truancy**  
Legislation that will improve how school districts report truant students to the Colorado Department of Education will be critical to predicting those students who are most at risk for dropping out, a continued issue of concern to the Children's Campaign.
- ✓ **Improvements to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**  
Measures supported by the Children's Campaign will allow children to participate in this important program for at least six months if a county lowers eligibility rates. An intensive six month study will take place to determine how to best set a floor for CCAP provider reimbursement rates, improving access to quality early childhood programs.



In addition to achieving the goals laid out in the Children's Campaign's 2008 Legislative Priorities, there were additional positive measures introduced and passed during the legislative session that we actively supported as beneficial to children. These include:

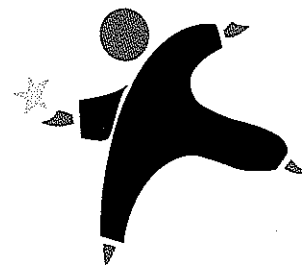
- ✓ **Alignment of a preschool through postsecondary education system (P-20)**  
The Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) measure makes significant progress toward streamlining Colorado's education systems by working to align standards, curriculum and assessments in order to improve educational outcomes.
- ✓ **Flexibility given to school districts**  
Schools and school districts will be empowered to be innovative in their approaches to educating children and implementing plans that meet the specific needs of each student through the passage of the Zones of Innovation measure.
- ✓ **Increased opportunities to fund school health programs**  
Expanded the list of eligible grant activities that school districts can apply for within the Comprehensive Health Education Act to include components of coordinated school health, including nutrition, physical activity and mental health services.
- ✓ **Increased resources to help students graduate and pursue higher education**  
The number of high school counselors will be increased in order to help struggling and at-risk schools promote students' completion of high school and their enrollment and success in the post secondary education system.
- ✓ **Improved access to critical data within the existing education system**  
Assigned unique student identifiers to children in publicly funded early childhood programs, aligning early childhood to the broader education system. This will provide information about student progress and the impacts of educational programs that serve them.
- ✓ **More protection for Colorado's most vulnerable children**  
Through Executive Order, the Governor established the Child Welfare Action Committee to examine the current child protection system and commit to its improvement in the immediate future.



## Stay Informed!

Become a part of our growing network of advocates and supporters. If you are interested in receiving weekly legislative updates and occasional action alerts, please go to our website at [www.coloradokids.org](http://www.coloradokids.org) and select the "Act Now" button on our home page. Next, select the "Stay Informed" link and fill out and submit the simple form.

For additional information, please contact our Director of Government Affairs, Lindsay Neil at [Lindsay@coloradokids.org](mailto:Lindsay@coloradokids.org) or (303) 620-4525.



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