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For Immediate Release

Date: March 15, 2022

Majority of Colorado voters align on early childhood systems change for all Colorado families, children, and providers

Voters across the state agree the multiple state agencies, various eligibility requirements and funding streams of our current early childhood programs are burdensome to navigate

DENVER, CO - A statewide poll conducted by Keating Research in February 2022 on the state of early childhood revealed that a majority of Colorado voters agree now is the time to make early childhood programs accessible for all kids and families. Building on the success of Prop EE, Colorado voters across the political aisle continue to affirm their commitment to providing high quality, affordable early childhood experiences for all families through a unified state Department of Early Childhood.

The polling data show Coloradans believe that early childhood programs and services must be easier for families to access. An overwhelming 80% of Colorado voters agree the state should work toward making early childhood programming more accessible by reducing bureaucratic practices, simplifying regulations, and reorganizing Colorado's existing programs – which currently exist under the jurisdiction of multiple different state agencies.

Colorado parents – including 75% of parents with children under five – say the current disjointed nature of early childhood experiences managed by multiple state agencies is too fragmented and burdensome to navigate. The majority of Coloradans (72% of registered voters) agree that the state should lead the administration and management efforts of our early childhood programs and work with local communities to build out successful and responsive early childhood experiences, services, and enrollment. Coloradans are united across all four corners of the state in their belief that simplifying the application and enrollment process for families is critical in providing them with true access to these services.

“The results of this poll speak for themselves – Coloradans view improved access to early childhood programs as a top priority. They want bold systemic changes that improve the lives of kids and families and reduce the burden on providers,” said Melissa Mares, Senior Policy Analyst for Early Childhood at the Colorado Children’s Campaign, has led the community input session process to inform the Prop EE and served on Transition Advisory Group. “Colorado voters across the aisle want to see an approach that

centers families and ensures they can easily navigate support programs, in addition to child care and preschool applications, enrollment, and payments.”

The Coalition for Better Beginnings Colorado affirms the findings of this poll. The coalition strongly believes that understanding and respecting the lived experiences of Colorado families is essential to the development and execution of a responsive, accessible Department of Early Childhood and statewide universal preschool program. The fragmentation of early childhood experiences has left Colorado families and children without the programs and supports they need to thrive, and providers without the resources and structures that are required to best serve families and uplift our essential early childhood workforce.

Building on the unanimously approved recommendations of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, the Colorado General Assembly has an opportunity this Legislative session to make this transformative vision a reality, through the codification of the new state Department of Early Childhood to better serve all Colorado families and early childhood providers. By aligning and expanding current funding and administration parameters to cover a diverse array of early childhood experiences, in a mixed delivery system, Colorado can provide the better beginnings that our kids and families both need and deserve.

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The poll findings are based on a random sample of 1,550 registered Colorado voters from across the state, through a mix of in-person and online panels and interviews conducted between Feb. 12 and Feb. 21, 2022. Results are weighted to accurately represent registered voters based on party, gender, age, geography, ethnicity, and education.

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