



# 2026

## Colorado Legislative Progress Report

**OUR MISSION:** As the business community’s nonpartisan voice for early childhood, EPIC leads efforts to build infrastructure and advance policies that support the workforce of today while developing the workforce of tomorrow.

The 2026 legislative session was marked by ongoing budget shortfalls. Legislators continued to seek new and innovative ways to identify new efficiencies, reduce spending and increase revenue. Through these tough conversations, EPIC continued our commitment to bringing business-minded thinking and partnership to identify proven and new solutions that support children, families and Colorado’s economy.

### BY THE NUMBERS



**\$800 M**

invested in early care, education programs and support in Colorado



**100%**

of legislators received information on EPIC’s 2026 policy and advocacy priorities



**6/7**

EPIC-supported bills passed



**10 years**

extension of the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit (CCTC)



**38**

childcare projects supported through technical assistance funded by HB24-1237



# CONNECTING BUSINESS LEADERS AND POLICYMAKERS



EPIC member Jamie Van Leeuwen, Colorado Governor Jared Polis and EPIC President and CEO Nicole Riehl

At EPIC's 2026 Legislative Breakfast, we invited business leaders to the Capitol to talk directly to legislators about early childhood and EPIC's policy priorities. In addition to 27 legislators and 18 EPIC members, staff and partners, EPIC was excited to welcome Governor Jared Polis and several representatives from his office.



EPIC member Amy Schwartz, Buell Foundation President and CEO Steve Erkenbrack and Senator Janice Rich

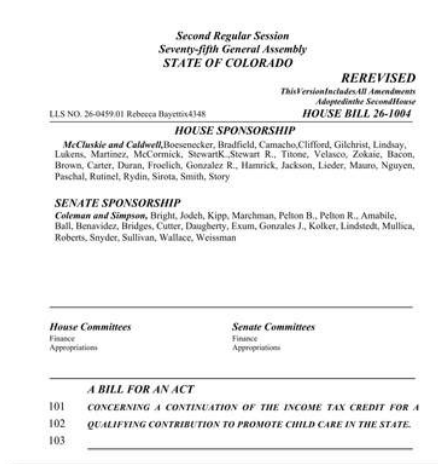
## LEADING ON PUBLIC-PRIVATE INVESTMENTS IN CHILDCARE

### EPIC 2026 Priority Legislation



Childcare organizations across Colorado use the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit (CCTC) to support their fundraising. More than **15,000 donors** donate **\$66 million annually** and claim the CCTC to receive a 50% credit on their tax returns. This public-private funding mechanism provides a critical lifeline for childcare as public sources become increasingly strained.

In 2026, EPIC was proud to lead a broad coalition to renew this tax credit for 10 additional years. **HB26-1004: Continuation of the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit** was sponsored by bipartisan leadership in the House and Senate (Speaker McCluskie, Minority Leader Caldwell, President Coleman and Minority Leader Simpson). Coalition efforts included a wide range of partners representing business, nonprofits, childcare, advocacy and others.



## SUPPORTING CHILDCARE BUSINESSES THROUGH REGULATORY ALIGNMENT

Childcare providers regularly identify confusing and conflicting regulations as a significant timeline and cost driver and stress on their businesses. Opportunities exist to address gaps and increase alignment and efficiency to reduce costs and processes associated with opening and expanding childcare businesses in all of Colorado's communities.

This session, we partnered with business leaders, local governments and advocates to shape **SB26-020: Child Care Provider Licensing & Quality** (Bright - R, Ball - D, Sirota - D, Gonzalez - R). This bill takes several important steps toward improving the regulatory environment for providers without compromising the health and safety of children by:

- Allowing certain electronic records to be used for streamlined licensing processes
- Improving consistency in training and oversight for childcare licensing agents
- Capping the fees local governments can charge for childcare applications
- Creating a taskforce to review and make recommendations on childcare licensing regulations

## IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

EPIC brings a business perspective to childcare policy and actively seeks opportunities to improve the efficiency of the government systems that support childcare.

### **SB26-019: Early Childhood Local System Consolidation**

(Ball -D, Bright - R, Sirota - D, Gonzalez - R) consolidates the function of Local Coordinating Organizations created as part of Colorado's Universal Pre-K program, bringing them under the umbrella of Early Childhood Councils.



*Colorado Chamber of Commerce President Loren Furman, Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies Patty Salazar, EPIC President and CEO Nicole Riehl and Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce Senior Manager of Government Affairs Rebekah Hernandez testified in support of SB26-137.*

### **EPIC supported SB26-137: Measures to Reduce Administrative Burdens**

(Coleman - D, Simpson - R, McCluskie - D, Caldwell - R) alongside our partners at the Colorado Chamber of Commerce to require that state departments review and update their rules and regulations every five years to identify opportunities for efficiency and improved customer experience.

### **HB26-1260: Updates to Child Care Assistance Programs**

(Garcia - D, Willford - D, Cutter - D, Bright - R) delays the implementation of several new requirements for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). While EPIC is supportive of the concepts in the previous legislation, this timeline extension is both practical and necessary given Colorado's budget constraints and rule changes at the federal level.

## SIMPLIFYING CHILDCARE CO-LOCATION

### HB26-1001: Housing Developments on Qualifying Properties

(Boesenecker - D, Mabrey - D, Exum - D, Gonzales - D) allows qualifying property owners to build affordable housing with a simplified administrative process. EPIC worked with the sponsors to ensure childcare was included as an eligible co-located use as a strategy for expanding childcare supply by integrating facilities into key community developments.

## IDENTIFYING INNOVATIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR CHILDCARE

### SB26-180: Investment Performance Authority

(Bright - R, Marchman - D, Garcia - D, Taggart - R) While the bill was ultimately not successful this session, it jumpstarted an important conversation about the need for additional childcare funding and the need for creativity in identifying new sources. This bill would have created a new type of investment mechanism for the state through a Special Purpose Authority with the proceeds benefitting childcare. We are energized by the renewed discussion about childcare funding and look forward to bringing EPIC's perspective to finding new and innovative solutions.

In addition to our legislative work throughout the session, EPIC engages in implementation, rulemaking and the other behind-the-scenes policy work that is often overlooked but equally important.

## IMPLEMENTATION SPOTLIGHT: CREATING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES



In 2024, EPIC led the way to create state-funded programs to provide technical assistance to support the creation of additional childcare supply in Colorado. The technical assistance portion of **HB24-1237 Programs for the Development of Child Care Facilities** has now supported three technical assistance cohorts and additional one-on-one direct support sessions representing 38 childcare projects in Colorado. Unfortunately, funding for this program is not scheduled to continue in the 2026-2027 budget and beyond.

EPIC continues to advocate for the availability of technical assistance and access to capital for childcare providers and invested community leaders and local governments.

*Learn more about EPIC's approach to public policy and advocacy.*

## EPIC Policy Team

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