STATE OF COLORADO

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Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

B 2010-002

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Creating the Governor's Early Childhood Leadership Commission

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Office of the Governor of the State of Colorado, I, Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order creating the Governor's Early Childhood Leadership Commission.

I. Background, Need, and Purpose

The health, safety, and developmental well being of Colorado's youngest citizens are key indicators of the overall health and economic condition of the State. These are a high public policy priority and it is our responsibility to ensure that young children in this State are fully prepared to enter school and life ready to achieve, succeed, and fully contribute to society. Research indicates that disparities within cognitive, social, behavioral, and health outcomes are evident by nine months and grow larger by twenty-four months of age. Early, comprehensive, and coordinated support and services that target young, at-risk children are imperative to enable later life successes.

The following highlight the complexity of and need for better alignment and coordination of efforts related to young children in Colorado:

- In Colorado, public investments for young children, including Colorado citizens from birth to eight years of age, fall behind investments for older Colorado children and lag behind national trends.

- Current resources targeting young children are derived from, at a minimum, twenty-three different public funding sources.

- Programs that support young children blend multiple sources of public funding, each with its own unique program standards and eligibility, reporting, data tracking, and funding requirements.

There are multiple early childhood related planning efforts and collaborative bodies, but no venue presently exists to allow high-level decision among policymakers to collectively study recommendations and make joint policy and funding decisions.

After nearly two decades of work by thousands of dedicated Coloradoans, there is consensus that the "early childhood system" is comprised of four system sectors that address the needs of children from birth to age eight, including early learning, child health, child mental health, and family support and parent education. Research confirms that these four areas are interrelated, and that it is difficult, if not impossible, to tease apart children's learning needs from their health and wellness, or from the involvement and support of their families.

The support systems and services that comprise Colorado's early childhood system are currently spread across multiple public agencies, including but not limited to the Departments of Education, Human Services, Public Health and Environment, Health Care Policy and Financing, and Higher Education, as well as various private entities. These must be efficiently coordinated, aligned to a common set of state and federal standards, and made accountable across state systems. A high-level, interagency, public-private leadership commission is essential to identify opportunities for, and address barriers to, the coordination of federal and state early childhood policies and procedures that impact the health and well being of Colorado's youngest children. Therefore, I am creating the Governor's Early Childhood Leadership Commission ("Commission")

II. Mission

The purpose of the Commission shall be to ensure and advance a comprehensive service delivery system for children from birth to age eight using data to improve decision-making, alignment, and coordination among federally-funded and state-funded services and programs targeted at young children and their families. The *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* (the *"Framework"*) will be the Commission's guide for developing this comprehensive, coordinated service delivery system for young children across the four service sector domains of child health, child mental health, early learning, and family support and parent education.

The initial charge of the Commission will be to focus on the development of an interagency data system, working in conjunction with the Government Data Advisory Board established by House Bill 09-1285, which expanded data tracking and usage across the multiple agencies and programs that support children from birth through third grade. This integrated data system will provide the infrastructure to monitor progress towards meeting the outcomes identified in the *Framework*.

The Commission's work shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Advise with respect to the creation of a unified, interagency data system to promote sharing and use of common data for planning and accountability;

B. Identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, the alignment of standards, rules, policies and procedures across programs and agencies that support young children based on interagency data analysis;

C. Developing methods for using interagency data to inform comprehensive policy and budget decisions;

D. Ensuring the interagency data system infrastructure allows for statewide needs assessments on the quality and availability of early childhood services, including but not limited to health, mental health, family support, and early learning services; and

E. Developing recommendations regarding a quality, cohesive professional development training and career advancement system, including performance metrics to guide continuous improvement processes for professionals working with young children.

III. Membership

A. The Commission shall consist of up to thirty (30) voting members who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

B. The following individuals shall serve as members of the Commission:

1. The Executive Director of the Department of Human Services, or his or her designee;

2. The Executive Director of the Department of Public Health and Environment, or his or her designee;

3. The Executive Director of the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, or his or her designee;

4. The Executive Director of the Department of Higher Education, or his or her designee;

5. The Commissioner of Education, or his or her designee;

6. The Executive Director of the Office of Information Technology, or his or her designee; and

7. The Head Start-State Collaboration Director,

C. Up to twenty-three (23) additional members, which should include individuals with the following expertise, affiliations, and/or backgrounds:

1. Representatives of local governmental groups;

2. Representatives of local school districts;

3. Individuals with Head Start expertise;

4. Providers of early childhood supports and services;

5. Individuals whose families receive early childhood supports or services;

6. Individuals from statewide non-profits involved in early childhood issues; and

7. Members of the business community.

D. The members of the Commission appointed pursuant to paragraph (III)(C) shall serve for two year terms, except that of those first appointed eleven (11) members shall serve initial terms of three years with the remainder serving initial terms of two years. Council vacancies shall be filled by appointment by the Governor for the remainder of the unexpired term. Any vacancy occurring in the membership of the Council is to be filled in the same manner as an original appointment and the vacancy is not to affect the power of the remaining members to execute the duties of the Advisory Council.

E. The Commission shall be appointed to assure broad-based regional, ethnic, and professional distribution of membership.

F. The Governor shall appoint co-chairs from among the members of the Commission.

G. The Commission may establish working groups or subcommittees from within its membership or outside its membership to assist in its work or to address specific issues.

H. The Commission shall meet regularly at the direction and discretion of chair of the Commission. Working groups, task forces or other structures established by the Council shall determine their own meeting schedules.

IV. Funding and Staffing

The Governor's Office shall provide to the Commission necessary support, including administrative support, data, and other analytical information. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start has made $1.3 million of funding available to Colorado to support the work of this Commission over the next three years.

The Commission shall have the authority to accept money and in-kind contributions from public and private entities, but only to the extent that such donations are necessary to cover its expenses. These funds may be used for the purpose of providing administrative support to the Commission as well as paying for the Commission's actual expenses. Any money contributed to the Commission shall be directed to the Office of the Governor and deposited with the Treasurer of the State of Colorado in an account within the Office of the Governor's budget. Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation, but may, at the discretion of the co-chairs and approval of the Office of the Governor, be reimbursed for any actual expenses incurred.

V. Directive

The Governor's Early Childhood Leadership Commission is hereby created.

VI. Duration

This Executive Order shall remain in force until modified or rescinded by a future Executive Order of the Governor.

GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado this eleventh of February, 2010.

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor