

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, D.C. 20510**

January 16, 2026

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write to express our deep concern over the Department of Health and Human Services' (Department) decision to withhold over \$300 million in Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding for Colorado.<sup>1</sup> These programs, CCDF, TANF, and SSBG, provide essential services to families most in need, and we are concerned they will be unfairly affected by this decision. We respectfully urge you to work with Colorado to ensure this funding gets to families and communities across the state in an expedient manner.

CCDF, TANF, and SSBG dollars help low-income families access basic necessities like childcare, groceries, and other social services that promote self-sufficiency and safety. Colorado uses CCDF dollars to fund the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, which helps over 18,000 families access childcare for more than 27,000 children. This program supports over 2,500 childcare providers across the state and ensures parents can work to provide for their families. Additionally, TANF supports over 50,000 children in Colorado, including nearly 20,000 kids under the age of 6, through direct cash assistance. SSBG funds help Colorado's Division of Child Welfare conduct over 30,000 child maltreatment investigations; provide prevention and intervention services to approximately 14,400 youth; and support out-of-home placements to over 6,000 children. These programs are critical to ensure our children are able to learn, grow, and thrive in safe environments.

These programs support American families. In a state like Colorado, the fifth most expensive state for childcare, these dollars have a real effect. They help lower costs for families and support the broader economy. This is especially important as families have faced rising costs over the past several years. While we support strengthening the integrity of these programs when needed, the Department states in its letter, without providing evidence, that Colorado has unlawfully diverted federal resources away from eligible families and asks the state to implement additional accountability requirements to improve compliance. Colorado has fiscal accountability systems and internal controls in place to prevent fraud and is willing to work with the Administration to determine if and where improvements are needed. We encourage the Department and Colorado to work together on a path forward to restore funding. Any lapse in funding from these programs would have serious consequences for many childcare centers operating in compliance with the updated guidance and the Colorado families depending on these programs. Finally, the letter requests a large scope of state-wide data within the next two weeks. Again, Colorado stands ready and willing to work with the Department, but the proposed timeline is challenging for the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cpr.org/2026/01/06/trump-freezes-colorado-childcare-food-aid-funds/>

state to meet, as most of the data is at the county level. We urge the Department to provide more details to Colorado so a resolution can be found as soon as possible.

We respectfully request that the Administration reinstate this funding. We stand ready to work with the Administration and the State of Colorado to ensure that federal funding is spent responsibly and assists Americans in need. To that end, we request your immediate response to the following questions:

1. In the Department's January 6th notification to Colorado, it states that the funding will be temporarily withheld "until further notice, pending successful and satisfactory review of the requested information." What criteria will be used to determine the release of funding and what is the expected timeline for disbursement?
2. What evidence has the Department identified in Colorado to warrant additional administrative requirements for CCDF, TANF, and SSBG funding?
3. On January 5th, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Child Care sent guidance to states requiring them to complete a "Defend the Spend" justification before they can request drawing down CCDF funds. When the Administration implemented similar measures in the spring of 2025, the release of funds was delayed by up to six weeks. How quickly will the Department review the justification statements and release funds?

Additionally, we request that the Department brief each of our offices on the status of these requests and the timeline that the Department expects to find a resolution with Colorado. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to the Department's response no later than January 30, 2026.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



John Hickenlooper  
United States Senator



Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



Gabe Evans

Member of Congress



Jeff Crank

Member of Congress



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Diana DeGette

Member of Congress



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Joe Neguse

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