

**Jamita Horton, Teach Plus Colorado Teaching Policy Fellowship alumna, on behalf of HB19-1262:  
Funding for full day kindergarten**

Thank you Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of full day kindergarten. My name is Jamita Horton and I'm in my 6th year teaching kindergarten. I currently work at a school in Southwest Denver. I am also a Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellowship alumna.

I just left a classroom of 26 students. When I told them where I was going and why, after a lot of discussion about whether the Capitol was a castle or the White House, we had an interesting conversation about why they thought kindergarten was important. The answers varied, as you can imagine. One of my kids said, "If we never went to kindergarten, first grade would be hard." Another kid added with vigor, "You would not know your letters, your numbers, and how to play with friends." When I probed about being in full day kindergarten, they said, "How would we solve math mysteries?" And, "We wouldn't build stamina like Wilma Rudolph."

This is just one moment that describes what kindergarten is. All kindergarteners are full of wonder about the world around them and want to understand it. Today, they were trying to understand why their teacher was going to the Capitol to explain why every family should have access to full day kindergarten. And why what we were doing in this moment made a difference

I'll be honest. When I first decided I wanted to teach kindergarten, I expected it to be a lot like the one I grew up with. In a half day, I remember playing with friends and learning letters. That was about it. The reality of kindergarten is a lot different today. I want to show you the biggest impact of a full day kindergarten through the eyes of some of my students.

I'll start with Josiah, who was certain I was going to a castle.

BEFORE: No letters, no numbers, struggling to hold a pencil.

NOW: can find all the ways to make 10, reads books like *Cat in the Hat* on his own, discerns main ideas from complex texts, and discusses them with his neighbors. He is also working on problem-solving independently.

I can also tell you about David.

BEFORE: Struggled to stay in a square, let alone on the carpet. When he saw other kids raising their hands, he asked me confused: "Why are they doing that?"

NOW: Learning to advocate for what he needs when he needs it.

Full day kindergarten gives these students and all students multiple opportunities to struggle through challenges and feel successes. It gives them more time to learn how to grapple when something is hard, how to count, to read, and most of all to understand the importance of their education. So, when I asked them if they think everyone should have a chance to be in kindergarten for a full day, the class told me without hesitation "YES." I can tell you from the kids in my class, that yes, we think everyone should have a chance to have what my kids get. And yes, we think you should support this bill for the funding of full day kindergarten to give access to those who want it for their children.