

Legislative Impacts 2020

The Colorado Children's Campaign is the leading voice for kids at the Colorado State Capitol and in communities across the state. Since 1985 we've worked with policymakers from every corner of the state and every political perspective to improve the well-being of Colorado kids. We are pleased to see bipartisan support this year in many areas impacting children's lives.

In 2020, legislators and advocates faced a massive public health crisis and economic freefall in the middle of the regular legislative session. Many important bills that would have advanced the well-being of Colorado children and families were lost. However, legislators returned to the Capitol to make incredibly difficult decisions to help families respond to, and recover from, the pandemic. Here are the results that we championed and supported.

NEW PROGRESS FOR KIDS

Basic Cash Assistance for TANF Families: SB20-29 (Fields & Moreno/Coleman & Duran) allows Colorado to use federal funds to ensure that families enrolled in the TANF program, who are experiencing extreme poverty, receive additional money in their pockets as soon as possible to help weather the immediate effects of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Health Care Affordability Fund: SB20-215 (Moreno & Donovan/Kennedy & McCluskie) allows Colorado to pick up a federal fee on health insurance providers set to expire at the end of this year in order to reduce premiums, increase tax credits for insurance subsidies and cover people left out of the system—including Coloradans without proper documentation.

Tobacco & Nicotine Tax for Housing, Education, & Pre-K: HB20-1427 (Caraveo & McCluskie/Fields & Moreno) refers a question to voters in November to raise taxes on nicotine products to fill budget deficits caused by the pandemic, and also establish a universal preschool program that targets the greatest resources to those with the most barriers.

Early Childhood Workforce Supports including Mental Health & Quality Improvements: HB20-1053 (Sirota & Wilson/Story & Pettersen) helps recruit and retain early childhood educators and support early childhood mental health.

School Finance Act with Mill Levy Equity Framework: HB20-1418 (Becker/Todd) sets funding levels for public schools and resets the way the state calculates a school district's property tax rate, creating a structure to reduce taxpayer inequality between districts.

Adjust Tax Expenditures for State Education Fund: HB20-1420 (Sirota & Gray/ Moreno & Hansen) increases fairness in our tax code by closing or means-testing certain deductions and by expanding the state Earned Income Tax Credit and making it available to working families who file taxes using an ITIN number.

Repeal Gallagher Amendment: SCR20-001 (Tate & Hansen/Esgar & Soper) refers a question to voters in November to repeal a constitutional amendment that forces permanent property tax cuts to residences. Repealing the amendment is expected to increase property tax revenue for local governments and reduce the state aid requirement for school funding.

School Entry Immunization Requirements: SB20-163 (Gonzales & Priola/Mullica) will improve state vaccination rates by standardizing the immunization exemption process and requiring schools to proactively notify parents of school immunization rates. It also supports public health vaccination efforts.

Budget wins in light of the pandemic and recession:

- Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+): \$26.2 million increase to ensure children and pregnant people do not lose coverage during the health crisis.
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP): \$5.6 million increase to support access to quality early care and education for working families.
- Colorado Preschool Program (CPP): Protected proposed cuts to slots.
- Full-day kindergarten: Protected proposed cuts to full funding for tuition-free full-day kindergarten.
- School meals: Protected funding for Smart Start (Breakfast after the Bell) and recent expansions of the Child Nutrition Lunch Protection Act.
- Early Intervention: No cuts to this year. The appropriation to CDHS will be reduced by \$1.7M in general fund for FY20-21, eliminating projected caseload growth for next year.
- Family Planning Program: \$0.7M reduction (15%) cut was less than proposed.
- Child support pass-through policy for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): \$321K reduction. A \$321K general fund appropriation level will allow the program to remain solvent and provide support families in Colorado with the lowest incomes.
- Family Resource Centers: Joint Budget Committee reduced line item by \$528,000 from \$1.3 million, but kept additional funding.
- Dental Services in Medicaid: Dental services will be maintained as a Medicaid benefit for pregnant adults, but the benefit cap will be reduced from \$1,500 per year to \$1,000 per year when disaster declaration is lifted.
- Tony Grampsas Youth Services: Proposed \$1.5M cut was reduced to \$750,000 cut.

PROTECTING PROGRESS

Weakening Immunization Standards (HB20-1063, 1144, 1239, and SB20-084): If not defeated, these bills would have significantly limited the ability of our government and community-based service providers to protect and promote public health and safety through vaccinations.

Repeal Colorado Reinsurance Program (SB20-145): The reinsurance program lowers premiums by helping insurance carriers reduce the risk of expensive claims. Individual Insurance

premiums dropped in Colorado by an average of 20 percent in the program's first year. Not only was this bill to eliminate the program defeated, but the program was extended and fully funded through SB20-215.