

Written Testimony as Prepared for Delivery in Support of **SB21-009: Reproductive Health Care Program** by Erin Miller, Vice President, Health Initiatives, Colorado Children's Campaign

Senate Health and Human Services

March 22, 2021

1:30PM

[Virtual Testimony](#)

- Thank you, Chair Fields and members of the committee.
- My name is Erin Miller and I'm Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign, where we fight for every chance for every child.
- I am here in support of this bill and with appreciation to Senator Jaquez Lewis for bringing it forward.
- In fact, I will be in front of this committee several times this week to speak to the benefits of several policies that will reduce unintended pregnancy in Colorado and help Colorado maintain its position as a leader in helping all people plan their families and chart their own futures.
- It is well documented that due to the systemic barriers they face, families that experience unintended pregnancies often have poorer health outcomes for themselves and their children, struggle to and often do not complete school, and have difficulty advancing their careers.
- Unintended pregnancy is also associated with several adverse birth outcomes, including preterm birth and low birth weight births that are driving causes of infant mortality in Colorado.
- Policies that reduce unintended pregnancy also meet the moment of the COVID response. Demand for family planning services has grown during the pandemic in the very moment when access to those services is most threatened due to family financial uncertainty and job losses – largely among women, that too often include the loss of health coverage. The 2020 Guttmacher Survey of Reproductive Health Experiences found that overall, one-third of women report wanting to get pregnant later or have fewer children because of the pandemic. The same survey shows that roughly a third of women are worried about being able to afford contraceptives. Hispanic women, Black women, Queer women, and women living in poverty were more likely to worry about their access to contraceptives.

- This bill would expand Medicaid to provide contraceptives for undocumented communities in Colorado and improve access to a 12-month supply of contraceptives for everyone on Medicaid.
- Creating a contraceptive Medicaid benefit to improve access to family planning services is critically important for our immigrant community.
- A Guttmacher study found that only half of immigrant women received contraceptive services or information in the previous year, compared to two-thirds of US-born women. This bill will increase access to these services for this community, and help to encourage community members who are eligible for full Medicaid benefits to enroll in the program through the welcome-mat effect – by creating a program designed for everyone, officials in fact encourage people who are already eligible for benefits to get enrolled.
- Further, this Medicaid program would expand access to family planning services beyond what is available through Title X clinics by removing geographic barriers to care. There are parts of the state where people can live more than an hour's drive from the nearest clinic that participates in the family planning program – in fact, more than 300,000 Colorado women live in contraceptive deserts.
- Establishing this program would also allow the state to add additional covered health benefits in future years, improving access to all types of health care.
- Further, reducing barriers to additional months of contraception at one time is evidence-based policy to reduce unintended pregnancies.
- Data from randomized controlled trials and cohort studies show that providing access to additional months of contraceptive coverage is associated with increased continuation of use, fewer pregnancies and abortions, and lower costs.
- This bill is a critical step in reducing unintended pregnancies and supporting healthy pregnancies and early parenthood in Colorado and we urge its support.