

# Lifting Children Up: 2024 State Advocacy Recap



## Making a Difference at the State Capitol

As state lawmakers conclude the legislative session for the year, we are proud to share outcomes from our advocacy efforts to give every Colorado child a healthy and strong start. Partnering with clinicians, families and advocates, we worked to pursue innovative policy solutions that will make a difference and positively impact the lives of children. Now that these many of these policy priorities are passed and signed into law, we will continue to advocate for robust action on implementation.

### Outcomes



173 bills monitored



377 people sent messages to their state lawmaker on child health priorities



30 experts testifying in committee hearings



200+ people trained in advocacy



12+ amendments to improve legislation



### Defending Access to Care

Food insecurity and housing instability are two of the most common health-related social needs identified by families with young children at Children's Hospital

Colorado who are covered by Medicaid. A stable, safe home and access to nutritious food are the foundations for a healthy life, but these essential building blocks of health are out of reach for many children. We were proud to be strong supporters of **House Bill 1322**, which directs Colorado Medicaid to pursue innovative models of care to connect families in need with stable housing and healthy food. We also spoke up in favor of **Senate Bill 168** to enable more remote patient monitoring services and to expand access to continuous glucose monitoring technology to people with Colorado Medicaid coverage. Children's Colorado's pediatric healthcare champions advocated to ensure kids have continued

access to rare disease therapies that could otherwise be limited by the state's Prescription Drug Affordability Review Board. This effort resulted in the passage of **Senate Bill 203**, which requires the Board to consult with consumer advocates and the Rare Disease Advisory Council as part of any affordability review. We supported important reforms for Colorado discounted care standards through **Senate Bill 116**, which will make hospital-based programs more effective and allow hospitals to determine if a child is presumptively eligible for Medicaid, helping to more quickly connect kids and families with insurance coverage. Despite incredible work by a coalition of advocates, a wide-ranging effort to expand insurance coverage for comprehensive obesity treatment, **Senate Bill 54**, was unfortunately lost due to state budgetary constraints.



### Elevating Children's Mental Health Solutions

Across the spectrum of children's mental health policy, we spoke up for mental health promotion and early intervention. **Senate Bill 001** will permanently

extend the I Matter Program to facilitate access to confidential, short-term mental health therapy for youth. We fought hard to identify state-level solutions to advance responsible social media regulations to address the growing evidence that overuse of social media can have negative impacts on youth mental health, including higher rates of anxiety, depression and disordered eating. The passage of **House Bill 1136** creates a resource bank for caregivers and youth to set healthy boundaries on social media use and requires social media companies to display pop-up warnings for youth at specified times. Another measure, **Senate Bill 158**, would have established age verification requirements for

social media companies to enact as well as tools to limit certain aspects for youth like appearance alteration filters and geo-location features. While this proposal was defeated, stakeholders expect to consider changes and return with an updated version of the legislation next year. Finally, as part of our ongoing efforts to identify systemic solutions to close the gaps in intensive home and community-based treatment programs for children with complex mental health needs, we were proud to support **House Bill 1038** to expand access to therapeutic and treatment foster care. Unfortunately, a transformative proposal was unsuccessful this year; **Senate Bill 59**, would have established a comprehensive System of Care model for youth mental health. However, our work will continue over the next year to leverage existing initiatives with similar objectives.



## Improving the Conditions Where Children Live, Learn and Play

### Keeping Kids Safe

The places where kids live, learn and play can shape health outcomes in many ways, and this year, we advocated for kids' health across many settings and issue areas. We were proud to lead a coalition of injury prevention advocates to keep Colorado children safe by updating the state's car seat, booster seat and seat belt laws through the passage of **House Bill 1055**. We also supported **House Bill 1348**, which builds on prior firearm safe storage laws by ensuring Coloradans safely secure firearms in vehicles with the goal to reduce the risk of injury or death among children.

### Housing

All of us benefit when we have a safe place to call home. While poor housing conditions can be harmful at any age, infants and toddlers are at a developmental stage where they are particularly vulnerable to household dangers and toxins such as lead, asbestos and mold. We supported **Senate Bill 94** to ensure that landlords provide timely remediation to mitigate hazardous issues. When it comes to housing stability, childhood is the most common age to experience eviction in America. Children who are evicted from their homes can face increased risk of food insecurity, exposure to environmental hazards, academic challenges and a range of

long-term physical and mental health problems. We supported **Senate Bill 64**, which will advance the collection and publication of key data from evictions to help identify any disparities and inform further policy solutions.

### Schools

Access to healthcare services provided in schools can help improve health and educational outcomes while strengthening health equity for children. We supported and advocated for the passage of **Senate Bill 34**, which will increase access to comprehensive healthcare services in school-based health centers, and we also advocated for **Senate Bill 142**, which will improve access to oral health screenings for students in elementary schools.

### Economic Stability

Across Colorado, more than 133,000 children are living in poverty. Childhood poverty is associated with developmental delays, toxic stress, chronic illness and nutritional deficits. We advocated for the successful passage of **House Bill 1311** to establish a Family Affordability Tax Credit, which will harness state resources to support working families to cover the rising costs of housing, food, and childcare, while also boosting the state's economy.

## Make a Difference as a Child Health Champion



Join our Child Health Champions advocacy network to quickly and easily advocate for kids' health.



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