

Lifting Children Up: 2025 State Policy and Advocacy Priorities Recap



At Children's Hospital Colorado, we believe in the power of advocacy to influence policy outcomes toward a safer and healthier future for every child. During the state legislative session, we worked with our clinicians and team members, patients and families, community partners and lawmakers to prioritize child health in a year with a shifting landscape and challenging budgetary conditions. We were proud to champion strong policies and preserve many state investments that will support Colorado kids, and we will continue to engage in the implementation efforts of these wins moving forward.

2025 Outcomes



155 Bills monitored



40 Experts testifying in committee hearings



20 Media stories on advocacy priorities



12 Amendments to improve legislation



350 People trained in advocacy



4,000 Messages from grassroots advocates to lawmakers on child health priorities



Strengthening access to care for all kids

Children across Colorado should be able to receive the healthcare services that are right for them, in the right place and at the right time. In 2025, we promoted improvements to the healthcare system to increase access to care including **House Bill 1162**, which streamlines Medicaid reenrollment and simplifies the medical documentation process for assessing long-term services and supports. We also advocated for **Senate Bill 71**, which protects the 340B Drug Pricing Program which allows safety net providers to purchase medications at a discount and invest drug savings into offering more comprehensive services to patients, at no additional cost to taxpayers.

We supported **Senate Bill 290** to improve financial stability for safety net community providers hurt by the increase in uncompensated care when hundreds of thousands of

Coloradans lost their Medicaid coverage. This collaborative solution will strengthen access to care in safety net primary care clinics and community mental health centers around the state. We also worked with Children's Colorado team members who identified access to care challenges for their patients. In response, we led **Senate Bill 84** to expand access to lifesaving intravenous nutrition for children with complex medical needs in Colorado, as currently only one infusion pharmacy in the entire state provides this needed therapy to Medicaid patients.

We also supported **House Bill 1153**, which directs the state to conduct a statewide language access assessment to evaluate current services and areas of improvement to help increase inclusive communications for Coloradans who speak languages other than English.



Budget prioritization

With the state facing a \$1.2 billion budget deficit this year, we fought hard to defend key child health priorities. This year's budget did see modest cuts in Medicaid and other kid-focused areas, but overall, lawmakers sought to prioritize healthcare spending given the precarious financial situation for many safety net providers in Colorado. In collaboration with partners, we were able to protect and secure public investments for kids' health, including:

- Prevented universal cuts to Medicaid and ensured a 1.6% provider rate increase
- Funding to fill this year's needs for the Early Intervention program and increased funding to support the ongoing growing caseload
- Maintained dental reimbursement rates provided through Medicaid

- Protection of Medicaid programs that support inclusive care like Cover All Coloradans and continuous eligibility for children ages 0 to 3
- Defended funding for Medicaid reimbursement to expand access to community health workers, also known as patient navigators

The need to create a balanced state budget resulted in cuts to transportation funding and other programs. In the healthcare realm, these cuts included eliminating funding for the mental health screening program for 6-12th graders in public schools, disordered eating prevention and research program, kidney disease prevention and education program and some targeted rate cuts for certain healthcare providers.



Promoting children's mental health and well-being

Children's Colorado continues to be a champion for policies that will increase access to mental health services, resources and innovative solutions for children and families. **House Bill 1002** creates fair standards for mental health coverage by ensuring private health insurance companies are not denying coverage for medically necessary mental health and substance use services that a healthcare provider has prescribed. We were also proud to support military families through **House Bill 1132**, which creates a grant program to expand community behavioral health services for service members, veterans and their families.

Research continues to show that rising social media use and screen time harms youth mental health. This session,

we worked collaboratively with partners to find state-level solutions to advance healthier and more responsible cellphone usage and social media regulations. We led the successful passage of **House Bill 1135**, which will require every Colorado public school district to develop a policy for cellphone use during the K-12 school day. We believe that consistently lower cellphone use during the school day will support better learning and mental health. Two additional measures, **Senate Bill 86** and **House Bill 1287**, would have required social media companies to do more to keep youth safe including the creation of tools to protect minors' well-being on their platforms. Unfortunately, neither of these bills passed this year.



Supporting kids' health at every age and stage

Children need different types of care and support at each unique stage of development, so we worked on a variety of different issues this session that impact kids' health throughout their lives. We helped formalize the pediatric primary care program HealthySteps into state law through **Senate Bill 17**, setting the foundation for future expansion of this program to help families support healthy early childhood development. We also built upon our previous work to keep Colorado kids safe through injury prevention measures, including supporting the passage

of **House Bill 1133** to increase the age of purchase for firearm ammunition to 21. We testified in support of **House Bill 1179** to require car insurance policies to cover the replacement of child car seats after a car accident, building on our work last year to update the state's car seat laws for children. Additionally, we actively advocated for the passage of **Senate Bill 191** to support cardiac emergency preparedness for students during the school day.



Championing our pediatric workforce

The pediatric healthcare workforce is foundational to ensuring all children have access to the specialized healthcare they need, and this session we were proud to support legislation to strengthen and protect these essential workers. Recognizing that stress and burnout in the healthcare workforce are at an all-time high, threatening the sustainability of access to care,

we supported the passage of **House Bill 1176**. The bill updates the state's licensing process to reduce stigma for healthcare providers who seek mental health and substance use supports. We also supported **Senate Bill 166**, which will help strengthen hospital workplace violence prevention efforts and help protect healthcare workers.

Make a difference as a Child Health Champion



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