INTRODUCTION

We work at the state Capitol and with state agencies administering Medicaid and other important public health programs, to ensure Colorado’s public policies help Coloradans achieve their best health. Together with our Policy Committee, we have a finger on the pulse Colorado legislation that both directly and indirectly affects health.

Each year, we identify key priorities for our legislative work that will move Colorado closer to health equity. To that end, we evaluate each bill’s potential health equity impacts, especially in assessing data related to race, income, and ZIP code, to understand how it might impact our communities or cause unintended consequences.

This session, we made great strides for behavioral health care access and immigrants’ health. We defeated harmful bills that would have especially targeted families that rely on Medicaid for their health care, LGBTQ Coloradans, and immigrants. We brought a health perspective to issues not normally associated with health care, and spoke out against injustice. Moving public policy forward is a slow, painstaking process, but we’re up for the challenge!
56 BILLS WE ADVOCATED FOR OR AGAINST THIS YEAR

41 SUPPORTED
10 MONITORED
5 OPPOSED
21 SUCCESSFULLY PASSED
5 SUCCESSFULLY DEFEATED

BIG WIN

Senate Bill 108—PASSED
This bill expands access to driver’s licenses for immigrants without documentation, which makes it easier for affected individuals to get to their doctor appointments and makes our roads safer.

Senate Bill 214—DEFEATED
This bill would have required Medicaid enrollees to work, seek work, volunteer or train for a job, restricting coverage for those who most need it and placing an administrative burden on the state.

OUR 2018 PRIORITIES
This year, we prioritized bills related to immigrants’ health, health care payment reform, and addressing the social factors that influence our health (especially in transportation, housing, and food access). We also supported efforts to protect and grow the health care safety net, improve access to and integration of behavioral health care, and increase affordability and transparency of health care.

BILLS ADVOCATED FOR/AGAINST

- HEALTH CARE 15
- IMMIGRANT HEALTH 6
- PAYMENT REFORM / HEALTH CARE COSTS 14
- SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH 21

PASSED

HB 1003: Preventing Opioid Misuse
This bill establishes a bipartisan study committee. It will lead to targeted legislative fixes to issues related to substance use and could lead to expanded access to prevention and treatment.

HB 1007: Coverage of Substance Use Services
This bill encourages non-opioid pain management and use of medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorder. It could help curb over-prescription of opioids.
HB 1086: Community Colleges to Offer Bachelor's in Nursing
This bill allows community colleges to offer four-year degrees in nursing. It expands education access and helps strengthen the provider workforce, especially among communities of color and rural communities.

HB 1112: Pharmacist Care Coverage
This bill allows certain health insurance plans to cover services provided by pharmacists in areas with provider shortages. It will allow patients to get care in underserved areas.

HB 1136: Treatment of Substance Use Disorder
This bill allows Medicaid funds to be used for more substance use treatments, expanding services while also improving quality of care by prioritizing evidence-based care.

HB 1196: Improving Applications for Aid to Needy & Disabled Program
This bill allows qualified personnel to conduct exams for people applying for cash assistance, making it easier for low-income Coloradans living with disabilities to get help.

HB 1256: Civil Rights Commission
This bill reauthorizes Colorado's Civil Rights Commission, which provides a way for Coloradans who have experienced discrimination to get legal help.

HB 1267: Income Tax Credit for Home Retrofiting
This bill provides a tax credit to Coloradans who retrofit their home to make it accessible to people living with disabilities, leading to greater quality of life for many Coloradans.

HB 1284: Disclosure of Prescription Costs at Pharmacies
This bill lets pharmacies provide patients with information about the cost of prescription drugs and any alternatives that are less expensive, helping Coloradans save money.

HB 1300: Local Colleges to Offer Bachelor’s in Nursing
This bill allows additional local colleges to offer four-year degrees in nursing. It expands education access and helps strengthen the provider workforce, especially among communities of color and rural communities.

HB 1313: Pharmacist Practitioners
This bill allows pharmacist to prescribe over-the-counter medication. It will increase collaborative approaches to care, especially in rural areas with primary care physician shortages.

HB 1321: Medical Transportation
This bill directs the state to meet urgent transportation needs within the existing transportation benefit in Medicaid, increasing access to non-emergency medical transportation for Medicaid enrollees.

SB 007: Affordable Housing Tax Credit
This bill allows the allocation of affordable housing tax credits through 2024, helping ensure families can afford housing.

SB 010: Receipt for Rental Payment
This bill requires landlords to provide rental agreements and receipts for payments, so renters have evidence when disputing claims.

SB 013: Access to School Lunches
This bill eliminates the co-pay for reduced-price school lunches, increasing access to no-charge lunches for eligible students, and keeping students fed and learning.

SB 020: Auriculur Acudetox
This bill expands the scope of psychotherapists who perform auricular acudetox, an ear acupuncture shown to help with substance use disorder and other issues.

SB 022: Clinical Practice for Opioids
This bill restricts the number of opioid pills that can be prescribed for an initial week supply, with certain diagnoses excepted. It could help curb over-prescription of opioids.
SB 024: Access to Behavioral Health Providers
This bill expands the behavioral health and substance use workforce through loan repayment and scholarships, to help areas in need.

SB 087: In-State Tuition for Refugees and Special Immigrants
This bill makes refugees and some immigrants eligible for in-state tuition, expanding their access to higher education and increasing their economic mobility.

SB 108: Immigrant Eligibility for Driver’s Licenses
This bill expands access to driver’s licenses for immigrants without documentation, which makes it easier for affected individuals to get to their appointments and makes roads safer.

SB 146: Notices in Freestanding Emergency Departments
This bill requires freestanding ERs to provide patients with information about the facility, so they understand their health care options. It will decrease expensive bills and improve price transparency.

DEFEATED

HB 1178: Accountability for Sanctuary Jurisdictions
This bill would have penalized politicians who put in place protections for immigrants without documentation, if such an immigrant committed a crime.

HB 1206: Religious Exemptions
This bill would have allowed businesses and adoption agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ Coloradans.

SB 204: Limit Discount Fares on Public Transit
This bill would have required legislative approval for discount bus and light rail fares.

SB 214: Medicaid Work Requirements
This bill would have required Medicaid enrollees to work, seek work, volunteer, or train for a job.

SB 220: Sanctuary Policies
This bill would have discouraged immigrants without documentation from residing in Colorado.

CONCLUSION

Several beneficial bills passed in the 2018 legislative session that will move us closer to health equity. Additionally, we were able to successfully defeat bills that would have created additional barriers to health equity for Coloradans. Some bills that would have been good for health equity did not pass this year, so we’ll continue to work on those alongside our partners and learn from what worked.

The 2018 election could bring some changes to the general assembly, so we will work hard to build new relationships and keep health equity in legislative conversations. Our work is far from complete, but we made solid progress this legislative session, and look to build on that next year.

To learn more about our work at the Capitol, visit: centerforhealthprogress.org/policy.