

TOGETHER, INVINCIBLE:

A Bold Agenda for Young Coloradans

Forward

The Rocky Mountain Young Invincibles (YI) office is committed to advancing policy benefiting young adults in higher education, health care (with an emphasis on mental health care), workforce development, and civic engagement. In Colorado, student debt disrupts the benefits of a college education and financial gaps widen between young people of color and their white peers. And yet - higher education remains a young adult's best pathway to financial security. The immediate aftermath and ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted health care affordability, quality, and access, further barring young adults from upward mobility in higher education and workforce development. The YI Rocky Mountain 2023 Policy Agenda will address **healthcare affordability** with a focus on disparities among marginalized racial/gender/sexual identities, **reproductive justice**, **workforce protections for hourly employees**, and increased access to higher education, particularly **for students furthest from privilege who need access to wraparound support services** in order to succeed. To learn more about how we develop our policy agenda, please check out our Annual Pulse of YICO.

Health Care

YI Rocky Mountain will advocate for policies that expand equitable access to health (physical + mental) and thriving for young adults. We will support efforts to increase medicaid access for young adults with mental health struggles, address gaps in reproductive and maternal care that disproportionately impact Hispanic, Black and Rural Coloradans.



LEAD

Community Benefit Dollars

Colorado's tax system limits the state's ability to generate revenue to fund public services like healthcare, education, and basic needs such as food, shelter, and transportation. This bill will create a funding source for local communities to fund health equity. Nonprofit hospitals are federally required to use a percentage of their revenue towards Community Benefit. This legislation will direct Colorado nonprofit hospitals to spend their "Community Benefit" dollars on healthcare gaps that address their particular community's needs. This is not a statewide prescription of community benefit priority areas, but rather specifies the community engagement process that hospitals must conduct in order to determine their yearly Community Benefit investment(s). In addition to addressing acute needs, the hope is that communities have access to Community Benefit funds for collaborative initiatives across sectors of care.

Statewide Universal Healthcare System Study

Young adults in Colorado continue to cite high out-of-pocket costs (insurance, copays, prescriptions, surprise fees, etc.) as the primary barrier to accessing physical or mental healthcare. When Colorado adopts a nonprofit public system to pay for our privately-delivered health care, it will save lives, save money, save young adults and our providers the headache and heartache of fighting with health insurance companies. This bill will assess the costs and benefits and ways to finance a Colorado universal health care system.

SUPPORT

Youth Medicaid Therapy Auto Qualify

If you are a young person 20 or younger with Medicaid, and you have been exposed to [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#), or traumatic events that occur during childhood such as; parental separation, parental substance abuse, family members incarcerated or have serious mental health issues. ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on health, well-being, and opportunity if an individual is not connected to support. This bill would automatically qualify ACE exposed young adults for family therapy. No diagnosis is needed to be referred.

Mental Health Medicaid Step Therapy

This bill prohibits the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), the department administering Medicaid, from requiring prior authorization, fail first, or step therapy requirements for any prescription drug indicated to treat a serious mental health disorder. Step therapy is a practice that allows insurance to mandate that individuals try less expensive medication options before "stepping up" to drugs that cost more, even if that negatively impacts your mental health.

Protecting Reproductive Health for Providers & Patients

While the 2022 Reproductive Health Equity Act enshrined abortion protections in our state constitution, we want to continue strengthening these protections for abortion providers and for those seeking an abortion (especially to the increasing number of out-of-state patients). This policy package will protect abortion providers and patients.

Specifically this law will:

1. Shield abortion providers and patients from lawsuits initiated by states with abortion bans (out-of-state lawsuits),
2. Prohibit deceptive advertising used by anti-abortion clinics, known as fake abortion clinics, and prohibit them from offering fake and dangerous treatment,
3. Close gaps in insurance coverage for reproductive health care, including sexually transmitted infections and abortion care.

It enshrines [Governor Polis’s July 2022 Executive Order](#) into law.

Medicaid Reimbursement for Doulas

HCPF requests to implement coverage for doula services for Colorado residents eligible for Medicaid during the perinatal period. This will allow for Medicaid members to have experienced birthing support. The Department plans to cover 6-12 visits, plus attendance at the member’s labor and delivery. Maternal mortality rates are still disproportionate for Latina/Latinx, Native American and Black individuals in Colorado. This bill would increase access to culturally competent maternity care with the goal of decreasing mortality rates.





Sales Tax Exemption Local

Expansion of HB22-1055: Sales Tax Exemption Essential Hygiene Products. HB22-1055 creates a state sales and use sales tax exemption for diaper and period products. This expansion will create an exemption for local municipalities.

Emergency Supplies For CO Babies and Families Funding Renewal

In 2021, Senate Bill 21-027 Emergency Supplies For CO Babies and Families was passed. The act creates the diaper distribution program in the department of human services to provide diapering essentials to parents, guardians, or family members of a child who wears diapers and resides in Colorado. This bill will create a funding extension to keep this program running.

Regional Health Connectors Expansion

Regional Health Connectors (RHCs) are a locally embedded workforce that aim to improve health in Colorado by connecting the systems that keep us healthy – including primary care, public health, social services, and other community resources. This bill will increase funding to expand the RHC program in each region. RHCs work within all 21 regions across Colorado building relationships between primary care, behavioral health, social services and other community resources to form a statewide network of public health and health resources. This expansion will better empower young adults to seek healthcare that fosters thriving for themselves and their community.

Higher Education

In 2023, Colorado college students are facing unprecedented levels of inflation, high cost of living, and the rapidly rising cost of college attendance. A lack of sufficient state investment in higher education perpetuates geographic, racist, and classist inequities in college acceptance, attainment, and retention. YI will work to pass policies to connect more students to financial aid opportunities, graduation, as well as career pathways that foster economic growth.

Support

Basic needs for college students and young adults struggling with cost of living - need more support from IHEs on wraparound.

Base Funding Equity Adjustment (Step 2)

Institutions that serve students with the highest need often receive the least amount of funding. This budget request will continue our work from 2021 to prioritize state funds to the schools serving students with the highest needs (Pell-eligible, underrepresented minority students, first generation). The bill will ensure that with cuts to the higher education budget, the equity measures from the 2021/22 base funding equity adjustment are maintained and continue to prioritize

per pupil funding to Higher Education Institutions that primarily serve students furthest from privilege and economic prosperity.

Repeal Selective Service Requirement

This bill would remove the current requirement that Colorado institutions of higher Education require men between the ages of 18 and 26 to register with the selective service. The Selective Service System keeps a list of men from which to draw in case of a national emergency requiring rapid expansion of the Armed Forces. This requirement is a barrier to many young adults considering higher education or completing financial aid applications.

Food Pantry Assistance Grants

Food pantries across Colorado rely on state support to purchase from local producers. This grant program renews House Bill 20-1422 which created grant programs to be administered to food pantries across the state. Many low-income college students experience food insecurity and rely on food pantries for local and culturally relevant food.



SNAP Outreach ~ Budget Request

Many college students do not realize they are eligible for food assistance (food stamps). This bill will fund a program adjacent to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) that provides application assistance and enrollment. The funding for the program would be split 50/50 between the state and private investors.

Higher Education Crisis and Suicide Prevention

Mental health crisis, and a student’s ability to be connected to services, remains a key indicator of academic attainment. The bill requires public and private higher education institutions to print Colorado and national crisis and suicide prevention contact information on student identification cards. If an institution does not use student identification cards, the bill requires the school to distribute Colorado and national crisis and suicide prevention contact information to the student body each semester or trimester.

Adult Education

Since educational attainment continues to lead to higher earning potential, we will support increasing access to high school diplomas and college credits to adult learners 21 years of age or older. The Office of Adult Education will be asked to expand the basic literacy offerings and to offer opportunities to earn a high school diploma, college credits, or industry-recognized certificates at no cost.

Workforce Development

Access to economic opportunity is critical for young adults. This access includes the support we need to get to work, such as transportation and/or childcare. Steady access to employment is critical for young adults to build generational wealth, and it is equally important that work does not interrupt one’s access to needs like healthcare, education, or family responsibilities.

SUPPORT

Fair Workweek

Unpredictable scheduling has harsh consequences for the economic stability, health, and wellness of workers and their families. This policy will include the following components:

What components should be included in Colorado’s Fair Workweek Policy?

- **Anticipated Work Plans:** Employers must develop anticipated work plans for each worker, describing expected hours per week, shift length, and shift times. Employers and employees are encouraged to work together to arrive at a mutually beneficial arrangement.
- **Advance Notice:** Employers must provide workers with a certain amount of advance notice of their schedules.
- **Predictability Pay:** When employers make last-minute schedule changes, they must pay workers for a set number of hours in addition to the actual time worked.
- **Ensuring Rest:** Employers must provide a minimum amount of rest time between shifts. Workers who consent to less rest time between shifts must receive a higher pay rate for those specific hours.
- **Access to Hours:** Employers must offer additional hours to current employees



before hiring additional workers.

- **Minimum Weekly Pay:** In most circumstances, employers must ensure workers receive at least nine hours worth of pay each week. Workers that do not perform work or who take unpaid leave may waive this requirement.
- **Part-Time and Short-Term Parity:** Employers must apply equal policies to all workers, regardless of their number of hours worked and expected duration of their work.
- **Retaliation Protections:** It is unlawful for an employer to take adverse action against an employee for exercising her rights under the fair workweek legislation.

Driving Test Fee Reduction

During the pandemic, budget cuts resulted in the Colorado Division of Motor Vehicles to stop providing driving tests in house, and instead rely on third-party providers. While this increased efficiency for the DMV, the lack of regulation on the third party providers results in testing costs often in the triple digits. This creates a huge barrier to accessing a driver's license for low-income folks, students, or people that need to retake the test. This policy requires the DMV (Division of Motor Vehicles) to make driving tests more affordable (currently \$75-300 per test) by raising the cost of a driver's license by a few dollars. Additionally, this legislation pursues language justice by requiring translation services to be made available to all third-party testers, regardless of geographic location across the state. The Driving Free Test Reduction policy will remove barriers to the workforce, post-secondary education, and necessary ID documents for young adults in Colorado.