



May 18, 2020

Honorable State Lawmakers
Honorable Governor Polis

Like you, we are deeply concerned about the health emergency, its economic consequences, and the impact of both on untold Colorado communities. We recognize that you have received numerous letters thus far from concerned groups. We come to you as a diverse and deeply organized group committed to working *with* you to reduce the need for the devastating cuts the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) is considering. In light of the extreme circumstances, our advocacy community has come together in commitment to a three-pronged approach that focuses on advocating for:

1. The appropriate **use of our state budget reserves**;
2. The **passage of a temporary state tax** that will raise substantial revenue and alleviate the disproportionate tax burden our low-income families are carrying; and
3. **Federal aid** that Colorado can use to fill budget gaps.

Our community is committed to advocating with our federal partners. We hope you will partner with us in this effort to raise the revenue we need by using the authority you have to deploy our reserves and pass an emergency tax.

Our state constitution authorizes the Colorado General Assembly to pass an emergency tax with a 2/3 majority vote in both chambers. Accomplishing this will require a legislative emergency declaration and a reclassification of our reserves so we can spend those down without selling our buildings. An emergency tax that creates income brackets with increasing tax rates could raise enough revenue to help prevent the worst of the budget cuts while reducing taxes on low and middle income Coloradans so they can better meet their needs, spend money locally, and drive the recovery of our economy.

If there was ever a time to use the emergency tax contemplated in our constitution, it is now. The crisis has put hundreds of thousands of Coloradans out of work, isolated our elders and people with a range of health challenges, suspended the in-person education of our children, threatened to overwhelm our health care system, and killed over 1,000 Coloradans in just two months.

The crisis has been especially devastating for Coloradans that were already facing economic hardship before the crisis hit. This includes Coloradans that work in service jobs that pay low wages and that fail to provide health insurance, paid sick leave, and other critical worker protections. Many of the jobs are in industries that were shut down as a result of the health emergency, sending workers and their families into a deeper financial crisis. Many of the jobs were deemed essential, so workers kept working,

facing increased risk of becoming infected and infecting their families. Drastic cuts to the very programs that exist to see Coloradans through hard times will constitute yet another blow to Coloradans facing economic insecurity.

And it will not be sufficient to save just some subset of those programs. Saving our primary care clinics and hospitals is critical but will be insufficient if their patients lose their housing, cannot get enough food to eat, or cannot afford transportation to get to their appointments. Affordable housing options for people with disabilities are critical, but they will be insufficient if those who don't have the ability to work lose access to income maintenance. Job training for people seeking employment is critical but it will be insufficient if the children of workers have a shortened school week and there is no access to affordable child care. Rural development funds are critical but will be insufficient if rural hospitals and colleges layoff employees and reduce services or close.

No matter how these cuts are formulated, they will put our communities that are struggling the most, in the greatest jeopardy and will spur future waves of job loss. Moreover, given the size of the budget shortfall, the choice isn't about cutting this *or* cutting that. It's becoming increasingly clear that, without new revenue, we are in a cut-everything situation. Furthermore, analysts are forecasting even larger shortfalls in FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 due to the prolonged loss of revenue to the state during the health emergency and the lag in collection of sales and income taxes. We simply cannot cut our way out of this crisis.

Please, join with us in this partnership to raise revenue and prevent the devastation that is coming to our communities if these cuts go through. We are studying these options and stand ready to help in any way we are needed. Thank you for your leadership during these hard and uncertain times and we look forward to working with you to see *all* Coloradans through this crisis.

Sincerely,

9to5 Colorado
Ability Connection Colorado
AdvocacyDenver
AFT Colorado
All Families Deserve a Chance Coalition (AFDC)
Alliance
Aloha Foundation/Colorado
Alzheimer's Association, Colorado Chapter
Atlantis Community, Inc.
Association for Community Living in Boulder County
Association of Colorado Centers for Independent Living (ACCIL)
Bayaud Enterprises
Bell Policy Center
Black Child Development Denver Affiliate
Boulder County Board of County Commissioners
Bright by Text
Coalition Against Global Genocide (CoAGG)

Center for African American Health
Caring for Colorado Foundation
Center for Health Progress
Center for Independence, Grand Junction
Center for People with Disabilities
Center for Work Education and Employment (CWEE)
Center on Colfax
Chaffee Housing Trust
Chanda Center for Health
Chronic Care Collaborative
Clinica Colorado
Clinica Tepeyac
Colorado Alliance for Health Equity and Practice (CAHEP)
Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care
Colorado Association of Family & Children's Agencies (CAFCA)
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
Colorado Association of People Supporting Employment First
Colorado Association of School Boards
Colorado Association of School Executives
Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC)
Colorado Cancer Coalition
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Children's Healthcare Access Program
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Colorado Community Health Network
Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado-CURE, Inc.
Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
Colorado Education Association (CEA)
Colorado Fiscal Institute
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
Colorado Jobs with Justice
Colorado Mental Wellness Network
Colorado Nonprofit Association
Colorado Nonprofit Development Center
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Colorado Ovarian Cancer Alliance
Colorado PTA
Colorado Rural Health Center
Colorado Safety Net Collaborative
Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
Colorado Social Legislation Committee
Colorado WINS

Community Resource Center
Connections for Independent Living
Disabled Resource Services
Disability Law Colorado
Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA)
Education Foundation of Eagle County (EFEC)
Epilepsy Foundation of Colorado
Family Tree
Focus Points
Fostering Colorado
Full Circle of Lake County
Good Business Colorado
Grand County Rural Health Network
Great Education Colorado
Habitat for Humanity of Colorado
Health and Wellness Initiative of the Foundation for Sustainable Urban Communities
HealthCare for All Colorado Foundation
Healthy Child Care Colorado
Hunger Free Colorado
Illuminate Colorado
Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado
Interfaith Alliance
Lake County Build a Generation
Let's Talk About Change LLC
Lupus Foundation of Colorado
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-Colorado
Maiker Housing Partners
Mental Health Colorado
Metro Caring
Metro Denver Homeless Initiative
Mi Casa Resource Center
NAMI Colorado
NAMI Denver
North West Colorado Center for Independence
Padres & Jóvenes Unidos
Parent Possible
Parents of Adults with Disabilities in Colorado (PADCO)
PASCO (Personal Assistance Services of Colorado)
Raise Colorado Coalition
Remerg
RMC Health
Rocky Mountain Multiple Sclerosis Center
Roundup Fellowship
SEIU Colorado
Servicios de La Raza

Small Business Majority
Southwest Center for Independence
Spring Institute
St. Francis Center
Support Jeffco Kids
The Arc of Adams County
The Arc of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties
The Arc of Aurora
The Arc of The Central Mountains
The Arc of Colorado
The Arc- Jefferson, Clear Creek & Gilpin Counties
The Arc of Larimer County
The Arc Mesa County
The Arc of the Pikes Peak Region
The Arc of Pueblo
The Arc of Southwest Colorado
The Arc of Weld County
The Arc of West Central Colorado
The League of Women Voters of Colorado
The Reciprocity Collective
Together Colorado
Transformative Freedom Fund
Tri-County Health Network
United for a New Economy
WE Care Patient and Family Coalition
Wellspring
Westwood Unidos
Young Invincibles