March 20, 2017

Dear Members of the Joint Budget Committee:

As a coalition of 22 organizations committed to improving the health and wellbeing of children in Colorado, we write to urge you to preserve the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS). This survey is a vital data collection tool that helps inform parents, schools and communities about the health, behavior and wellbeing of our students over time.

The biennial survey is both **voluntary** and **anonymous**, administered to students in grades 6 through 12. School districts have the authority to determine the best way to administer the survey in their district. HKCS produces the state's most reliable source of information on health topics such as student safety in schools, mental health, physical activity, and tobacco and other substance use.

Teens who have a trusted adult to go to for help with a serious problem are 3.5 times less likely to attempt suicide. But without the HKCS, there would be no way of knowing that less than three of four (71.3 percent) Colorado high schoolers report having an adult that fills that role. There would also be no way of knowing the rates of bullying and sexual violence experienced by Colorado's students, or of knowing where marijuana use among teens is highest now that retail sales are legal in the state.

Districts, local communities, nonprofits, and others rely on data provided by HKCS to create programs and secure private grant funding to appropriately serve the needs of our kids. As just one example, the Douglas County Mental Health Initiative used the data to form a youth substance abuse coalition focused on the misuse of alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs. This led to the development of a community-based prevention plan to reduce the likelihood of abuse of these substances by youth. The Douglas County Mental Health Initiative is just one of many programs that have been created in response to concerning outcomes highlighted by the HKCS.

Statewide agencies, such as CDE, also use the data to target award funding through grants such as The School Health Professionals Grant and the Colorado School Counselor

Corps Grants, which provide funds for eligible education providers to enhance the presence of school health professionals such as nurses, psychologists, social workers and counselors in secondary schools. After awards are granted, HKCS data are then used to monitor progress and ensure desired outcomes.

Many community initiatives, including Full Circle in Lake County, The Late Start Initiative, OASOS Programs in Boulder County, and the Communities That Care Grant in over forty communities would not be possible without the valuable information gathered from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey. When the Joint Budget Committee takes up this agenda item, please vote to **preserve the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey** and ensure that Colorado maintains the critical data that support policy decisions and programs that help make Colorado kids healthier.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter
Bould County Public Health
Caring for Colorado Foundation
Children's Hospital Colorado
Colorado Academy of Family Physicians
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Youth Matter
Denver Public Health
Denver Public Schools
Healthier Colorado
Hunger Free Colorado
Kaiser Permanente
LiveWell Colorado
Marijuana Industry Group
One Colorado
Oral Health Colorado
Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains
Smart Colorado
Tri-County Health Department