

Written Testimony as Prepared for Delivery in Support of HB 1003, Opioid Misuse Prevention, House Public Health Care & Human Services, March 13, 2018 – Erin Miller, Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign

- Thank you, Chairman Singer and members of the committee for having me here today.
- My name is Erin Miller, I’m Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1003 and we thank the Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Interim Study Committee and Chairman Singer as well as Representatives Pettersen, Buck, and Kennedy for addressing this critical issue.
- We support HB 1003 because it will increase access to substance abuse services for youth who need them.
- Substance abuse impacts Coloradans of all ages. We at the Children’s Campaign have a network of volunteer leaders across the state. During our statewide retreat last June, our network leaders spoke often about effect of opioids on the infants, children and families in their communities. We appreciate that the Interim Committee is, through this bill, focusing on youth substance abuse treatment and prevention, both through school-based health centers and youth serving agencies using evidence-based prevention programming.
- Substance use among Colorado high-schoolers varies by type of substance and geography. The most commonly used substance among high-schoolers is alcohol. Nearly 60% of Colorado high-schoolers report having ever used alcohol, and 17% report binge drinking (that is, consuming 5 or more drinks on one day) in the last 30 days. 14% of Colorado high-schoolers report inappropriately using a prescription. National survey data indicate that 4.4% of Colorado youth ages 12 to 17 report misusing pain relievers specifically.
- The good news is that while adolescence is a risky time for substance use it is also a very effective time for treatment. In adolescence, the brain goes through an intense period of construction, a period of “heightened neuroplasticity” when changes in neural wiring are easier to make. This sensitivity means that substance exposures that might have only short-term effects on adults can make durable changes in adolescent brain architecture. At the same time, neural plasticity makes adolescents especially receptive to prevention and early intervention efforts. A relatively simple intervention—for instance, a carefully-designed conversation that promotes re-evaluation of behavior—can head off substance misuse.
- We also support continuing the work of the Opioid and Substance Abuse interim committee. These issues impact Coloradans across the state and of all ages and stages. In fact, accidental overdose from prescription or recreational drugs is a leading cause of maternal mortality in Colorado. So we appreciate the Interim Committees work and appreciate the desire to continue this work in future years.
- This bill makes meaningful steps to reduce you substance abuse in Colorado and we urge your support of HB 1003.