



Dear Members of the Colorado State Board of Human Services:

The Colorado Children's Campaign strongly supports the "Basic Cash Assistance Increase" proposed rule (Basic Cash Assistance Increase (9 CCR 2503-6) 18-01-03-01). Across Colorado, nearly 60,000 children lived in families that received basic cash assistance ("BCA") in 2017. Increasing BCA grants to reflect inflation would strengthen this critical lifeline for the children in Colorado who are facing the greatest barriers to opportunity.

The proposed increase in basic cash assistance is especially critical now. The cost of living has skyrocketed in many Colorado communities in recent years, yet the basic cash assistance grant has been stagnant for nearly a decade. The BCA amount has stayed flat even as Colorado's median rent increased by 42 percent between 2011 and 2016. As necessities like housing become more expensive, it becomes harder for families to stretch their dollars far enough to meet their children's basic needs. The proposed increase is not enough to keep pace with the growth in cost of living, but boosting the BCA grant would help keep Colorado families from falling even further behind.

Basic cash assistance is particularly important to families because of its flexibility. While many other anti-poverty programs are dedicated to assisting with specific needs (e.g., child care, health care, housing or food), basic cash assistance is one of the few resources that can be used flexibly. An extra \$46 per month in basic cash assistance will help families afford diapers or pay for car repairs—pressing needs that often go unmet by other programs.

The toxic levels of stress that often accompany poverty have lifelong impacts on Colorado's kids. Decades of research show that children who experience poverty are at higher risk for health problems, more likely to start school at a disadvantage, less likely to graduate high school on time and more likely to live in poverty as an adult due to the lack of resources they experience during childhood. Research shows, however, that boosting the income of low-income families with children and pregnant women improves child outcomes. Supplemental income support is associated with higher birth weights even absent any health intervention. (Williams & Costa, 2012) There is also strong evidence to support that programs that increase family incomes lead to higher academic achievement among children. These positive outcomes are seen into adulthood, including higher adult earnings and an increase in the number of hours worked. (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011)

Increasing the basic cash assistance grant to reflect inflation can help families along the path to economic security and mitigate the harmful impacts of poverty on our children. We commend the Colorado Department of Human Services staff for bringing forth this proposal and respectfully request your support of this effort that will help remove barriers to opportunity for Colorado's youngest residents.

Sincerely,

Kelly Causey, Ph.D.
President & CEO