

October 20, 2017

Letter to Colorado's US Senators and Representatives; cc: to Governor Hickenlooper

Dear Senator X / Representative X:

As foundations dedicated to the health and overall well-being of people living in Colorado, we urge you to support access to affordable contraception and family planning services. We have seen the benefits of this access in Colorado, and know that this low-cost public health benefit underpins a healthy start for babies and women's health and educational and economic opportunities.

Colorado has achieved significant outcomes from recent increased investment in health education and voluntary access to effective contraceptive methods:

- The birth rate for young women ages 15 to 19 has been cut by more than half, falling 53 percent;
- A similar downward trend can be seen among women ages 20 to 24, with birth rates dropping 30 percent;
- The number of repeat teen births (teens giving birth for the second or third time) dropped by nearly two-thirds (63 percent);
- Births to women without a high school education fell 38 percent;
- The abortion rate among women ages 15-19 fell by 53 percent and the rate among women ages 20-24 fell by 27 percent;
- The rate of rapid repeat births – which carries greater risk for women and their children – declined by 12 percent among all women;
- The average age for a first birth increase by 1.2 years among all women; and
- Colorado avoided more than \$66 million in public health related costs.

This is a success by anyone's measure and is, in part, why other states are working to replicate the progress experienced in Colorado. The true value of these numbers is in what's behind them: thousands of lives have been improved and health, education and economic opportunity is being realized. Ensuring that Colorado women have access to family planning services so they can choose when and whether to start a family is critical in advancing economic opportunities for them. When pregnancies are planned, women have a better chance for greater career stability and earning potential. And when women thrive, so do their children, families, communities, and all of Colorado.

Family planning and access to affordable contraception is a cost-effective public health investment. We are proud to play a role in meeting the need in our state – but we cannot do it alone. Several funding streams come together to meet the demand for this essential primary health care service. Federal funding, together with state, local and private funding, are what enable health centers to provide women with the birth control method that works best for them. Insurance coverage has also enabled more women to access health services they need and desire, including highly effective contraceptive methods that provide an array of health benefits.

Decreases in funding streams, coverage exemptions and a reduction in the availability of health education programs undermines the life-changing progress we have seen in Colorado. As you consider

funding and policy issues that will impact access to family planning information, coverage and services, we urge you to reflect on the evidence and benefits that have been working in Colorado and the potential to further improve the health and lives of people and communities across the state and the nation.

Should you have questions or desire more information, we hope you'll be in touch with us. Chris Wiant, President and CEO of Caring for Colorado Foundation, is the point person for this collaborative of committed foundation partners, and he can be reached at 720-524-0770.

Sincerely,

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