



# Confronting the Harmful Impact of Disinformation for Health

A safe and stable home is essential to our health and well-being. Nonetheless, far too many Coloradans are forced to live in substandard homes, particularly people living on low income who are most deeply impacted by the state's housing affordability crisis and who potentially face dire consequences when speaking out against [inattentive property managers](#).

When housing is neglected—whether through poor maintenance, outdated systems, or general disrepair—the consequences for residents can be severe. Families living in these conditions often face chronic health issues such as asthma, respiratory infections, and heightened levels of stress and anxiety. The link between poor housing and poor health is [well-documented](#) and property owners are legally and morally obligated to ensure that their tenants' homes are well-maintained. Yet, the struggles of tenants and tenant advocates often go unnoticed, overshadowed by other, more sensational headlines.

We are seeing this right here in Colorado where [scare tactics and anti-immigrant language](#) has painted Aurora as a community overrun by crime, and housing issues have gone ignored. False accounts of gangs taking over entire apartment buildings have become a bit of a national distraction. This is at a time when, according to the 2024 Pulse Poll, [89% of Coloradans feel that housing affordability is a serious problem](#). Rather than focusing on the unhealthy conditions some Coloradans are forced to live in and supporting the solutions communities are using to address these problems, public attention has shifted to outrageous remarks by politicians and inflated claims of gang violence. Missing from the public sphere are robust conversations about the strategies and work needed to ensure that all Coloradans have access to quality, affordable homes that

support health and well-being.

This is how disinformation works. It serves as a smokescreen, distracting us from the real solvable problems that demand our collective effort. Disinformation makes it that much harder to hold those in power accountable to real action and to advocate for meaningful change. It is a tool often used by those in power to deflect accountability and solution-making, but its impact runs much deeper than just shifting and distracting public focus.

At its core, disinformation can divide communities, stoke fear and perpetuate systemic inequities. In situations like this, think about who is harmed by lies – and who benefits. Disinformation also serves as a potent weapon of hate, especially against immigrant communities and communities of color. Manipulated news stories and false narratives often portray these groups as threats, feeding into harmful stereotypes that foster division and resentment. In Aurora, the focus on gang violence has reinforced negative stereotypes, fanning the flames of anti-immigrant sentiment and eroding the empathy and connection that should bind us together. When these narratives take root, the humanity of entire communities is diminished, making it easier for discrimination and violence to flourish. In fact, because of disinformation, immigrants in the city are having a [hard time finding work and places to live](#). Disinformation has created an added roadblock for some Coloradans to support themselves and their families.

But there is hope. In the face of disinformation, we all have a role to play in pushing back and promoting the truth. [We are the first line of defense in protecting the integrity of information](#). This means we must utilize our critical thinking skills, question the sources of the information we encounter, and verify claims before believing or sharing them. By seeking out reliable, fact-based sources and engaging in thoughtful, honest dialogue, we can resist the pull of disinformation and work toward solutions that address the real problems, like housing affordability, affecting our communities and their health.

Communities across Colorado are grappling with serious issues, and it's essential that we focus on these challenges in ways that uplift rather than disparage. The individuals most deeply impacted often have the solutions to the challenges they face. It is imperative that we listen to and respect their lived experiences.

Together, we can reject the dehumanization of any group and build a more just and equitable state—one where the voices of all people are heard and honored, especially those whose voices have historically been ignored.

In the face of disinformation, let's prioritize truth, compassion and solidarity to tackle actual problems and create lasting, meaningful change. Colorado deserves nothing less.

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## **BY**

[Karen McNeil-Miller](#)