The Colorado Health Foundation™

Facing the Challenges, Together

After a difficult year, I hope you've entered 2026 feeling supported by the relationships that keep you grounded. At the same time, I want to recognize that this year has begun with real challenges, and that many folks are holding pain, fear, and uncertainty.

As we carry that reality forward, let's also acknowledge the momentum we built in 2025 towards positive change. That progress in the face of unprecedented federal threats is real and worth holding onto. Together, we moved closer to health equity by strengthening relationships, sharpening strategies, and investing in the infrastructure that makes long-term change and resilience possible.

That forward movement matters because, as we're already seeing, 2026 will ask more of us as we strive toward a future where health is in reach for all Coloradans.

What We Face: Pressure on Our Communities and Our Shared Values

Communities are facing growing pressures. These challenges reflect a broader pattern that conflicts with our Colorado values: caring for our neighbors, recognizing shared humanity, and rejecting the idea that anyone is expendable.

Dignity, belonging, and safety are fundamental, but they are in short supply for our loved ones and neighbors who are immigrants, people of color, transgender, and/or facing economic insecurity.

- **Immigrant communities** are essential to Colorado's social, cultural, and economic life and make our state stronger, but the current federal administration is threatening their health and safety. Racial profiling that targets communities of color, illegal ICE activity, intimidation tactics, and inhumane conditions at immigration/ICE facilities (like what has been documented in Aurora) reflect a broader national pattern of enforcement-related violence and harm.
- **Transgender young people and their families** face growing uncertainty as clinically appropriate, evidence-based care is delayed or suspended by political pressure. While this care remains legal in Colorado, when families are denied the ability to make their own health care choices, trust in our institutions erodes—not just for families facing this current situation, but for anyone who depends on the health institutions that serve Coloradans to act with integrity and compassion.
- **Families already under economic strain** are facing added stressors. Federal policies and state budget cuts are weakening Colorado's social safety net at a time when stability matters most. The ongoing threat of a freeze on federal TANF funds, uncertainty around childcare funding, and broader threats to state resources, places an immediate burden on families, service providers, and community networks.
  These funding threats are in addition to the ongoing impacts of H.R.1 (also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act). Changes to health coverage, increased pressure on state budgets, and disproportionate impacts on rural communities are creating impossible choices for people, often living in places where resources are already stretched thin.

These pressures are deeply connected. When some people or communities are excluded from care, community health worsens across the state. When fear

replaces trust, institutions become dysfunctional. When dignity is denied to some, the social fabric that supports all of us is weakened.

Building What We Need, Together

Despite these obstacles, community organizing and mutual care remains a clear source of strength across Colorado, and there are real opportunities to fortify our collective capacity. In 2026, CHF will continue investing in shared infrastructure, community-led organizations, institutions, and initiatives that can help each of us respond right now and build long-term power.

The Colorado Health Symposium will remain a key space for learning, alignment, and healing (stay tuned to learn more about this year's event). Our annual Pulse data and insights will support clearer case-making and deepen understanding of community experiences. We will continue sharing timely and accurate information, tools, and resources through CHF communications channels and will focus on replacing harmful and inaccurate narratives with ones rooted in truth, belonging, dignity, and shared responsibility.

A Call to Action for 2026

It is important to note that 2026 is a critical election year in Colorado. Civic engagement matters. Stay informed, vote, connect with others, care for yourself and community, and encourage others to do the same—we are all part of moving our work forward.

The unfair systems of exclusion, inequity, and isolation are not abstract or accidental. They are created and held in place by people. Because of that, we have the power to change them. Change may not come quickly, but it does come when we stay focused on our commitment to inclusion, equity, mutual care, and connection.

To wrap up, I want to share one of my favorite quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

This quote reminds me how connected we are and that we are all impacted by injustice. None of what we set out to do this year can happen in isolation. Lean on one another, invest in relationships, and take care of yourselves and those around you.

Although 2026 will be another challenging year, I know that together, we will move forward, and we will advance health equity and racial justice. We are made for this moment.

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