The Colorado Health Foundation™

Statement on Chiles v. Salazar

At The Colorado Health Foundation, we know that young people's health is shaped by the world around them. Feeling connected, building trusted relationships, and accessing supportive resources all play a role in their ability to grow, navigate challenges, and envision a future as their full and authentic selves. When young people are treated with dignity, have agency in their own lives, and are free to be themselves, they are more likely to thrive.

Policies and practices that create harm or manipulate a young person's sense of self are a threat to good health and well-being. Conversion therapy cultivates shame and blame, and there is clear and consistent consensus across the medical and mental health fields that it is dangerous at any age. It is linked to increased risks of depression, anxiety, and suicide, especially for LGBTQ+ youth.

The Supreme Court's recent decision in *Chiles v. Salazar* raises deep concerns and has left many feeling shaken. To be clear, the decision does not change the harm conversion therapy does to communities. The ruling is narrowly focused on how states regulate speech, not about whether conversion therapy is safe or legal. While the decision may alter one path states have used to protect people from these practices, it does not eliminate all pathways to accountability for the harms they create. Individuals who have experienced harm from conversion therapy still have legal options, and there remain opportunities to enact policies that protect people, especially young people, while meeting constitutional standards.

We must continue to champion the conditions that help our communities thrive so all Coloradans may live free and healthy lives with a strong sense of agency, safety, belonging, and respect for the rich diversity of cultures and identities across Colorado.

The decision in *Chiles v. Salazar* is deeply painful, especially for LGBTQ+ people and their families. If you or someone you love needs help, The Center on Colfax has a list of resources on their website.

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