The Colorado Health Foundation™

How Public Comment Shapes the Policies That Shape Our Health

The choices that shape our health often take the form of laws, policies, rules, and budgets; decisions that can feel far removed from our day-to-day lives. Yet they touch everything: The homes we live in, the care we receive, the food we eat, the jobs we go to, and the air, water, and land we depend on.

This is one of the many reasons why it is important for people in every community to provide input on the decisions that affect their lives. Taking this step isn't always easy. Policy processes can be confusing and time-consuming, and meaningful participation is often limited by systems that aren't designed to accommodate language or accessibility needs, distance from decision-making spaces, work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, and more.

If you'd like to learn more about what people in Colorado identified as meaningful reforms to make state policymaking processes more accessible, responsive, and transparent, we invite you to review our Transforming State Governance reports.

Public comment is one of the most direct and meaningful ways for communities to influence the policies that affect their lives. It is a process that requires government agencies to ask for input from the public whenever they propose changes to how major programs operate or how laws are implemented. There are many ways to provide this feedback at the local, state, and federal level; here, we will focus on the federal public comment process.

What do we mean by public comment, and why does it matter?

When a federal agency proposes a new rule or a change to an existing one, it is generally required to ask the public for their comments. These written comments can describe the real-world consequences of the proposed rules, provide data that support or challenge the rules, and highlight how the rules could affect specific communities.

Federal agencies must consider the comments they receive, which may lead to revisions. Even if public comments do not ultimately change the course of the proposed rulemaking, they serve as a public record of support or opposition and can inform future policymaking, as well as decisions made by courts.

Why does The Colorado Health Foundation submit comments?

The Colorado Health Foundation sees public comment as an important tool for advocating in support of health equity and racial justice. Federal rules have far-reaching effects, and public comment is an opportunity to illustrate the impact of proposed policies on Colorado communities, particularly those historically left out of policymaking.

We use public comment to:

- Voice our support for rules that advance health equity and racial justice
- Draw attention to rules that undermine health equity and racial justice
- Describe the consequences that the proposed policies will have on Coloradans.

We share recent comment letters in the news section of our website and an archive of past letters can be found here.

Example: HUD “mixed status” rule

In April 2026, The Colorado Health Foundation submitted a comment letter to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in response to a proposed rule change that would change eligibility for federal housing subsidies. The rule change would require every member of a household receiving federal housing assistance to be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or a noncitizen with legal immigration status.

For families in which at least one member does not meet this requirement (i.e. a "mixed status family"), families will be faced with the choice to either remove that person from the home or risk eviction due to loss of federal housing assistance.

We believe Colorado's health system and communities are strongest when every resident, regardless of birthplace or immigration status, can safely access the care and support they need to thrive. Access to safe, affordable housing impacts all aspects of a person's life. Our comment letter opposed this proposed rule because we believe it worsens the affordable housing crisis and further raises fear among immigrant communities.

How can you submit a public comment?

The Foundation has created a Public Comment Process 101 guide with tips for crafting effective comments. Submissions can be as brief as a few sentences or as detailed as a longer response. Commenting guidance is also provided on regulations.gov.

How do I find regulations that are open for comment?

Current regulations are published on regulations.gov and in the Federal Register (federalregister.gov). You can sign up for email alerts through the Federal Register to be notified when a regulation is scheduled to be published. Both sites allow you to search by docket number or posting date to find the regulation you

want to comment on; however, regulations.gov is the official site to submit electronic comments.

Where do I submit my comment?

Once you have selected a regulation you want to comment on, you can submit your comment during the comment period, typically 30 to 90 days from the date that the regulation is published. Be sure to closely check the timeline. Regulations are regularly posted with the shortest possible comment period (30 days), which can result in fewer comments due to the quick turnaround time.

Public comment is a powerful way to exercise political power. If you are interested in learning more or want to discuss ways to engage in the public comment process, please contact us at Show email.

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