

SUMMARY OF CONVERSATIONS WITH ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Colorado's Policymaking Processes: Advocacy Organizations

FEBRUARY 2022



The Colorado Health Foundation™



The issues and suggestions raised in this summary report present multiple opportunities for advocacy focusing on reforming the processes of policymaking in Colorado's state government.



Summary of Conversations with Advocacy Organizations

WHAT COULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR OUR STATE GOVERNMENT TO OPERATE DIFFERENTLY, TO SHIFT ITS POLICYMAKING PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND JUST SYSTEM?

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) is the state’s largest private foundation and works across every corner of the state to bring good health and well-being within reach for everyone who calls Colorado “home.” So much of our health is not only based on individual choices and the conditions of our neighborhoods, but also on the public policies that govern our lives. We believe all Coloradans should have the tools and opportunities to be healthy where they live and should have a voice in the decisions that impact them.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations, including government institutions, to adapt and adjust how they operate. In light of this opportunity for innovation, CHF staff leaned into learning what these changes could teach us about reimagining the ways we could lift up the voices of Coloradans to better inform how public policy decisions are made - to shift power to those most impacted by these policy decisions that make leading a healthy life a reality.

In 2021, CHF policy staff began exploring not just *what* specific policies become law in Colorado, but also the underlying *how*. How do Colorado’s state government institutions operate? What are some of the pain points where people feel excluded, confused, or unwelcome in the ways in which policy is currently made in our state? Exactly what is it about the procedures of introducing, crafting and implementing policy decisions that influences who participates in the process? We wanted to better understand where and how these “rules of the game” affect which voices tend to have the greatest influence on policy decisions in our state.

METHODOLOGY

Because consideration of the policymaking process itself has been a relatively under-explored area of focus for CHF’s policy engagement in the past, we looked to other organizations and individuals with deep experience in Colorado’s policymaking ecosystem to help us deepen our perspective on how state government could operate differently to make the processes and procedures more inclusive, equitable and racially just.

During October and November 2021, CHF policy staff conducted interviews with 25 organizations that engage in policy advocacy work to listen to their experiences with state government institutions. Staff used our 2019 report on Colorado’s advocacy ecosystem to develop a targeted list of organizations representing a wide range of issue expertise, geographies

and advocacy tactics. Organizations led by or centered on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities were prioritized. While this sample is by no means a comprehensive list of all advocacy organizations in our state, it represents a range of perspectives on state government institutions and the beginning of further exploration.

Advocates were invited to reflect on how Colorado's state government could operate differently to make the processes and procedures of policymaking more inclusive, equitable, and racially just. These conversations generally covered four areas:

1. **State Legislature:** Operations of the state legislature, including bill development, the bill life-cycle and the state's budget process.
2. **Administrative Processes:** Including both formal rulemaking processes from state boards and commissions as well as other actions taken by the Governor and/or state agencies.
3. **Statewide Ballot Measures:** Including both referred measures and citizen-led initiatives.
4. **Judicial System:** Operations of Colorado's state court system.

In all four categories, advocates were asked to reflect on their own experiences interacting with state government institutions to understand (1) what currently works well in state government and allows a broad range of voices and perspectives to be heard in policymaking processes; (2) what makes it difficult to engage in the process or stacks the deck in favor of certain perspectives or interests; and (3) what changes to the policymaking process could make it more inclusive, equitable, and racially just?

CHF staff analyzed what we heard in these conversations for key themes and potential opportunities for further exploration. Those themes are presented in the following sections in **alphabetical order**. The number of times each issue was mentioned is included in parentheses, **though the quantity of mentions does not necessarily represent the level of importance**.

The contents of these reports are reflective of the viewpoints and experiences of the interviewees, and are not to be taken as a recommendation, opinion, or viewpoint from CHF. CHF is ready to work with partners across the state to advance meaningful reforms in service of all Coloradans.

State Legislature (N= 21):

The majority (21) of the organizations interviewed engage in advocacy work with the Colorado General Assembly.

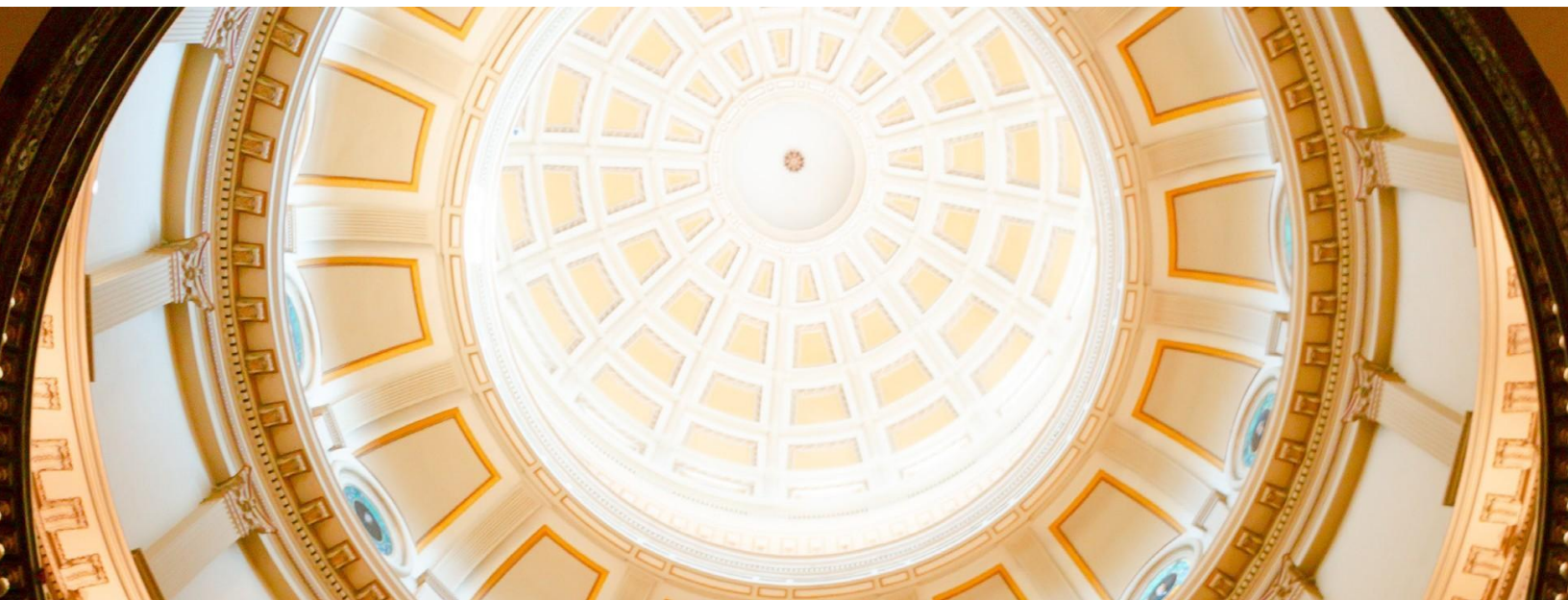
WHAT WORKS WELL?

When thinking about what works well in the state legislative process, the following emerged as highlights:

- **Accessibility of some legislators (11):** many advocates highlighted that some legislators are engaging with community in an authentic and meaningful way and are accessible and open to dialogue. Respondents also highlighted that there are more BIPOC legislators and legislators "from community" than there were in the past.
- **Amendment 41 (1):** the "gift ban," was highlighted as a strength in limiting deals between lobbyists and legislators.

- **Colorado General Assembly website (6):** There was acknowledgment that if you know where to look, the General Assembly Website has many valuable materials. It was highlighted that the site has vastly improved over the years to allow access to quality information, including bill tracking, calendars, committee information and legislator biographies.
- **Gavel Amendment (4):** the Gavel Amendment, that requires public hearings on all bills, was called out as a major strength of the Colorado Legislature and something that doesn't happen in all other states.
- **Remote testimony (14):** the majority mentioned that the option to give remote testimony that the state legislature introduced during the pandemic has been a positive change. Specifically, remote testimony: allows for greater representation geographically in the legislative process, allows for more community voice to be included in testimony in a manner that feels safer and less intimidating than being in person; and allows for easier participation in the legislative process, especially given the unpredictable nature of scheduling for committee hearings.
- **Robust caucuses (3):** several advocates praised the caucus system, specifically the Colorado Democratic Latino Caucus and the Black Caucus, as a way to bring in community voice and center equity.
- **Single subject rule (2):** the requirement that bills may only contain one subject, that is articulated in the title, was highlighted as an advantage for tracking issues of interest in the legislature.

The strength of the nonprofit advocacy community and coalitions was mentioned by several advocates as a unique attribute in Colorado. And while challenges were acknowledged, one advocate reflected that “on all fronts I generally feel better about the Colorado legislature than the national stage in terms of our processes.”



WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

When asked about barriers that make it difficult for community voice to be included in the process, a range of issues were discussed. The most common challenges mentioned include:

- **Complexity of the budget process (6):** the budget process is seen as harder to influence and more “opaque” than standard legislation. Power is centralized with Joint Budget Committee members and there is even less opportunity for engagement and input.
- **Digital divide (2):** while remote testimony was viewed as a huge benefit, it was also noted that this process only works for those who have reliable access to technology.
- **Elitist environment at the capitol (8):** the capitol building itself was mentioned as being “intimidating, formal, and a really uncomfortable place for most people.” The norms in how people dress, speak and behave results in giving power to those who know the rules of the game.
- **Fiscal note guidelines (3):** the inconsistency and unreliability of the fiscal note process was mentioned, as well as the inability to project longer-term cost savings or expenses of a potential policy change.
- **Inside game (13):** A common reflection made is that in order to engage with impact in the legislature, you must have a paid lobbyist and familiarity with the processes. It was mentioned that industry voices are stronger than the voices of real people, rules are not consistently enforced, deals are cut behind closed doors, and conflicts of interest are not always disclosed or made public. As one advocate said, you “shouldn’t have to be part of the special club, and the club with money, to access your legislator.”
- **Lack of meaningful community engagement (9):** while some legislators do engage with community in a genuine way, this was seen as an area of needed improvement. There is a sense that legislators frequently rely on the same voices in the process creating lack of real understanding of complex issues and solutions that are not community-driven.
- **Lack of paid staff (4):** it was acknowledged that legislators are under-resourced compared to legislatures in some other states. The legislative aide jobs that do exist are low wage and come without benefits. As one advocate mention, this dynamic, “results in a privileged pipeline into the capitol. Being an aide is a pipeline for political power... and we are giving that power to young people who can afford to take a part time job with no health insurance.”
- **Lack of translation services (3):** bill materials and legislative hearings are available only in English unless advocates provide translation services.
- **Power of lobbyists (8):** given legislator term limits, power and historical knowledge is centralized with lobbyists, giving them tremendous power and influence over the legislative process. It was also highlighted that there are very few BIPOC lobbyists.
- **Referring controversial issues to the ballot (3):** more and more, legislators are “legislating by the ballot” by referring complicated and controversial issues to the ballot to protect political reputation. There is a constant focus on reelection rather than making good policy.



“You shouldn’t have to be part of the special club, and the club with money, to access your legislator.”

- **Unpredictability of schedule (10):** while the value of having public testimony and remote testimony was acknowledged, the unpredictability of the schedule is a major challenge. There is no real predictability of hearing length or schedule, which frequently results in witnesses waiting for hours to share their stories.
- **120-day Constitutional provision (4):** in addition to legislators being under-resourced, the 120-day limit of legislative session is seen as consistently resulting in end-of-session chaos and inconsistency in how bills are prioritized.

WHAT WOULD MAKE THE STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES MORE EQUITABLE?

Advocates were given a “magic wand” and asked what they would change about the state legislative processes to make it more inclusive, equitable and racially just. The following ideas were shared:

- **Clarify roles of committees (1)**
- **Eliminate the filibuster (1)**
- **Eliminate legislative term limits (1):** this would reduce the power and reliance on paid lobbyists and allow legislators to think more about good policy rather than re-election strategy.
- **Enforce Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) requirements (1)**
- **Enforce five bill limit for legislators (2)**
- **Improve scheduling (2):** including both the enforcement of advance agenda posting as well as scheduling more reasonable hours for hearings.
- **Keep remote testimony (10):** as stated by one advocate, “Absolutely keep the virtual testimony option. This allowed real people and not just lobbyists to participate in the legislative process. It is really empowering.”
- **Make the capitol building more accessible and culturally relevant (6):** simple changes could help make the environment at the capitol friendlier (e.g., tours, fact placards, trainings on the legislative process, training for legislators make hearings more inclusive for those testifying).
- **Place limits on paid lobbyists (1)**
- **Provide child care, meals and transportation for those testifying (3)**
- **Provide training and resources for legislators (3):** require legislators to go through an anti-bias training to reduce “othering” at the capitol. In addition, provide more non-partisan education for legislators and paid staff.
- **Provide translation services (5):** participation in the legislative process should not be limited to those who speak English.
- **Require community outreach (4):** create a standard minimum threshold of community engagement (outside of campaigning) for each legislator so that they are better informed of community priorities and needs.
- **Require equity impact analysis for all bills (3):** the idea of a “demographic fiscal note” or an “equity impact analysis was suggested as a new requirement that would really look at the racial and poverty impact of legislation.
- **Strengthen the caucusing system (2):** this was one solution offered to allow more genuine and regular dialogue and exchange of ideas.
- **Strengthen the pipeline for leadership from community (5):** create a pipeline for BIPOC leaders to become lobbyists, aides, government affairs consultants and legislators. Make running for office more accessible for young people and those truly

representing community.

- **Strengthen the Secretary of State Website (1):** make it more transparent to identify on which bills lobbyists are working.

Administrative Processes (N =21)

Of the organizations interviewed, the majority (21) reported engaging in administrative advocacy – either through formal rulemaking (n=21) processes or through engagement with state agencies and/or the Governor’s Office (n=15).

RULEMAKING (N=21): WHAT WORKS WELL?

When thinking about what works well about rulemaking processes the following strengths were acknowledged:

- **Better resourced than legislature (1):** it was noted that state rulemaking boards have dedicated, paid staff which is helpful with research and outreach.
- **Strengths of different boards (5):** it was acknowledged that rulemaking boards operate differently. Some were specifically highlighted as being more transparent and effective than others.
- **Strong partnerships possible (3):** some of the rulemaking boards are seen as being very responsive to advocates when relationships are in place.

RULEMAKING: WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

When asked about barriers, common issues included:

- **Difficult to engage constituents (9):** the public is generally unaware of the rulemaking process. Engagement in the work favors organizations that can employ paid staff or a lobbyist model – and even those organizations with resources have trouble engaging effectively. The rulemaking process is not set up for meaningful community engagement.
- **Inconsistencies across Boards (10):** the lack of standardization between boards makes it very time consuming and challenging to track rulemaking activities. Across the boards, there are dramatic variations in websites, meeting rules and formats, treatment of public comment, and the notification and posting of materials. In order to navigate this inconsistency, advocates must dedicate significant staff time must to monitoring these activities. The language used on websites and in materials is also seen as “jargon heavy” and too technical for the average Coloradan to understand.
- **Inside game (13):** perhaps even more than the state legislature, respondents emphasized that navigating the rulemaking process is an inside game. You must have relationships in place, and most likely a lobbyist to know how to engage in or influence the rulemaking processes. As one advocate stated, “you can’t win at games when you don’t know the rules.” Another described the process as “impenetrable – there is no other way to describe rulemaking.”
- **Lack of transparency (9):** the rulemaking process was frequently described as “opaque.” There is a sense that pressure and influence is frequently at play behind the scenes.
- **Little community representation (4):** staff and board members are predominantly white with little perceived community representation.

- **No equity standards or expectations (2):** while a process exists to request fiscal cost/benefit analyses of proposed rules, there is no equivalent process to request an analysis of the equity impact of rules as they are being developed.

Generally, there was recognition that there is a lot of opportunity in the rulemaking process, but it's difficult to know how to engage. As one advocate stated, "I know how much power there is in this process, but it's completely overwhelming to know where and how to focus as a smaller organization.

RULEMAKING: WHAT WOULD MAKE ADMINISTRATIVE RULEMAKING PROCESSES MORE EQUITABLE?

The following ideas were shared as opportunities to make the rulemaking processes more accessible and easier to navigate:

- **Better enforce existing public meeting law requirements (1):** there should be stronger requirements around notifying the public about rulemaking activity and hearings.
- **Consolidate boards (1):** it was mentioned that there is substantial overlap between some of the boards and their responsibilities. Consolidation of several boards would be helpful in keeping track of activity.
- **Provide translation services (2):** materials and hearings related to rulemaking processes should be available in other languages in addition to English.
- **Require intentional outreach to communities impacted by rulemaking (5):** it was suggested that listening tours and community conversations as well as standards in notifying communities impacted by rulemaking activity would be an advantage. Two respondents suggested that rulemaking boards should have a designated community outreach position on staff.
- **Standardize formats and procedures across boards (5):** creating consistency in language, and standardization of the website, notification processes and meeting formats across all boards would make it easier to learn to navigate administrative rulemaking.

AGENCY ENGAGEMENT (N=15): WHAT WORKS WELL?

When thinking about what works well when working with how state agencies and the Governor's Office conduct business and make policy decisions that do not require formal rulemaking processes, the following strengths were acknowledged:

- **Good people working in agencies (5):** it was acknowledged that there are some fantastic and passionate staff, looking to make a positive impact in Colorado.
- **Open meetings (3):** open meeting rules as well as more recent virtual meetings were seen as a positive for meaningful engagement.
- **Some effective cross-agency coordination (1):** One positive example mentioned is the deliberate and coordinated effort between multiple agencies to address food insecurity in Colorado.

AGENCY ENGAGEMENT: WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

When asked about barriers, common issues included:

- **Challenging budget process (3):** the lack of transparency around state agencies' budget process makes it very difficult to understand where decisions are made and when in the process there is a chance to influence an agency's budget request and/or spending decisions.
- **Challenging grantmaking and contracting process (3):** the money granted out by agencies tend to have substantial reporting requirements and to be administered on a reimbursement basis. There also is not transparency around who and how those contracting and grantmaking decisions are made. There is no standardized requirement around equity.
- **Inside game (11):** as with the state legislature and administrative rulemaking, working with agencies is seen as an "inside game." There are pathways to engagement, but you have to have those relationships to know where and how to advocate. There is also a sense that there are many back door conversations that happen frequently outside of public view.
- **Low coordination between agencies and data systems (3):** given that many agencies serve the same clients, there is frustration that there is often little coordination between agencies and data systems do not "talk to each other."
- **Low level of community engagement (5):** for some of the agencies, there is a sense that when community engagement does occur, it is "tokenized" or a "checkbox" effort. Unless this is explicitly prioritized by leadership, it doesn't tend to happen in a meaningful way.
- **Status quo is the default (2):** Although the strength of agency staff was applauded, there is also a perception that it is very difficult to innovate or "look at the bigger picture" within agencies, which results in maintaining the status quo.



"If you want equity to be the north star for departments, you need to have staffing and resources in order to execute."

AGENCY ENGAGEMENT: WHAT WOULD MAKE AGENCY PROCESSES MORE EQUITABLE?

The following ideas were shared as opportunities to make state agencies more equitable, inclusive and racially just:

- **Improve community engagement and equity work (5):** there was acknowledgment that agencies need to do a better job engaging community voices. Several (3) specifically mentioned that there should be dedicated staff for equity and engagement work. Agencies, commissions and task forces should consider hiring and working with individuals from the communities being served. As expressed by one advocate, "if you want equity to be the North Star for the departments, we need to have staff and resources to execute."
- **Increase transparency and consistency across agencies, department and task forces (4):** there is a desire for increased transparency in decision making processes. Specifically, there should be clear contacts listed, schedules, materials and timelines in a consistent way. There should also be more transparency in the decision-making and budget development processes.

Statewide Ballot Measures (N =19)

The majority (19) of the organizations interviewed also engage in advocacy work around statewide ballot measures.

WHAT WORKS WELL?

The following benefits of the statewide ballot measure process were cited:

- **Citizen-led process is a benefit (6):** Gratitude was expressed for the ballot initiative process as a “great form of democracy.” Generally, the process for getting things on the ballot is accessible, and engages citizens in the policymaking in a meaningful way.
- **Mail-in voting (1):** this was cited as a well-run process that increases voter participation.
- **Single subject rule (1):** this was generally acknowledged as a positive to help ensure that voters understand what they are considering on the ballot.
- **Strong Secretary State Office and Election Rules (3):** Overall there was acknowledgment that the Secretary of State’s office runs a reasonable, transparent process and provides helpful resources.
- **Signature Collection Rules (2):** while not a perfect system, there was praise for the live-check voter registration system as well as ability to sign electronically. There was also appreciation of the new signature collection rule the requires inclusion of signatures from all Colorado counties for constitutional changes. While this does raise the bar for the effort needed to get on the ballot, it was cited as a benefit to ensure that measures truly represent the interests of Coloradans.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

When asked about barriers, common issues included:

- **Complicated Language on the Ballot (9):** because of TABOR requirements, language around tax measures was specifically called out as excessively complicated and difficult to understand. And generally, language on the ballot is viewed as “inaccessible and jargon-filled,” especially for first-time voters.
- **Complicated Language in the Blue Book (8):** the language in the Blue Book is seen as “incredibly political, convoluted and jargon-filled.” The language in this resource doesn’t translate to improved public understanding of proposed measures and contains confusing information.
- **Cost (10):** It was acknowledged that it takes a substantial amount of money in order to collect signatures and get something on the ballot. Especially in odd election years, it is challenging to raise funding to run opposition campaigns. There were also reflections that there is a lot of “outside money” coming into Colorado because we do have a citizen-led ballot process. As stated by one advocate, “if you have money, you can get anything on the ballot.”
- **Diminishes legislator accountability (5):** because legislators have the ability to refer politically sensitive issues to the ballot instead of making a policy decision in the General Assembly, there is a sense that the ballot measure process reduces legislator accountability. As stated by one advocate, “voters shouldn’t be dealing with



“If you have enough money, you can get anything on the ballot.”

easements and property tax – to put every tough issue back on the ballot is simply irresponsible.”

- **Flawed signature collection process (6):** it was acknowledged that the general public does not always understand what they’re signing and there is a lack of rules and accountability during the signature collection phase. One advocate expressed that “most people don’t read all the language before they’re signing things in front of King Soopers. And collectors will lie to get signatures.”
- **Lack of language access (3):** generally all materials are available only in English. It was mentioned that Colorado is an “English-only state” in our Constitution.
- **Lack of transparency around campaigns (1):** it is often difficult, or impossible to determine the driving forces behind campaigns. As summarized by one advocate, “statewide ballot measures are expensive, and are governed by hidden and esoteric rules.”
- **Too easy to put things on the ballot (3):** there is a sense that if you have enough money, anything can make it to the ballot, resulting in “long, complicated and cluttered” ballots, especially in election years. The focus is also on the “win” rather than thinking through passing good policy and effective implementation.

WHAT WOULD MAKE STATEWIDE BALLOT MEASURES MORE EQUITABLE?

The following solutions were offered to help make the ballot measure process more equitable and accessible:

- **Centralize tracking of title board activity (2):** one entity should monitor and provide resources around title board activity so that organizations aren’t all having to do this on an individual basis.
- **Improve campaign finance and accountability laws (2):** including stricter rules on out-of-state money for campaigns.
- **Improve signature collection (2):** change how this process works and how it is financed. The possibility of electronic signatures was also mentioned.
- **Language simplification (7):** the most frequently cited need is to simplify language on the ballot and in the blue book. Several advocates suggested that the blue book should be completely reimagined to make it easier to understand and to translate to the public.
- **Repeal, old, “bad” measures (1):** allow repeal of measures by a simple majority if they were passed under the old laws of 50% +1
- **Require community outreach (2):** several advocates suggested that outreach to impacted communities should be a required step in the ballot measure process.
- **Require more comprehensive analyses of ballot measures (1):** analyses shouldn’t just be for tax measures, but fiscal and equity analyses should be available for all measures.
- **Translation services (3):** ballots and blue books should be available to voters in their native languages. There currently is variation in how this is done at the local level.



JUDICIAL SYSTEM (N =8)

Fewer (8) organizations interviewed engage in legal advocacy work in Colorado's state court system than in other areas of advocacy.

WHAT WORKS WELL?

The following benefits of the of the Colorado judicial system were cited:

- **Improvement in courthouse and electronic materials (1):** some improvements has been made to self-help materials and access to online forms and information if you have access to a computer.
- **Remote testimony (1):** this option has been less traumatizing for individuals and has been a benefit during COVID.
- **Some new state funding for right-to-council (1)**

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

When asked about barriers, the following issues were cited:

- **Inconsistency between courts (1):** the court systems is predominantly "local control," resulting in inconsistencies in practices and procedures. As explained by one legal advocate, "each court and some individual judges do things differently – some are operating in person, some are remote, some are hybrid. There are different timelines. Return times vary greatly. We have a mishmash of processes and procedures because the state supreme court doesn't want to tell local courts how to do things."
- **Institutional biases (3):** it was mentioned that there are entrenched institutional biases in the court system, predominantly based on race and income. As one advocate stated, "litigation still remains a classist and racist system." Another advocate mentioned that the court is "predominantly white" and maintains a stance of "neutrality," though there are "deeply-rooted biases."
- **Lack of access to information (1):** one advocate mentioned that it is very challenging to reach county clerks, even for lawyers. This is greatly compounded for average people seeking reliable information.
- **Lack of legal services (3):** there are not enough legal advocates to meet the need of those living on low income. Similarly, the non-profit legal infrastructure in Colorado is under-resourced and does not have the capacity to meet the demand. It was also highlighted that there is almost no representation available for administrative court challenges and there are "major gaps in litigation creating discrimination and racial inequities." It was also mentioned that generally courts have low knowledge about public benefits.
- **"Pay to Play" (7):** there was strong acknowledgment that in order to navigate the legal system, one must have resources. Trying to navigate the system with "self-representation," is nearly impossible. As summarized by one advocate, "access to justice really favors the rich and that's the struggle. It is so hard for ordinary people to access the justice system in any meaningful way." Another stated that "we don't provide resources to make justice attainable for people without means."



"Access to justice really favors the rich and that's the struggle. It is so hard for ordinary people to access the justice system in any meaningful way."

WHAT WOULD MAKE COLORADO'S JUDICIAL SYSTEM MORE EQUITABLE?

The following ideas were offered to make the judicial system more equitable:

- **Allow telephonic signatures and completion of forms (1)**
- **More funding for legal services (6):** the top solution offered is to provide more funding for lawyers and advocates to represent those without adequate means, including funding for undocumented clients.
- **Other services for those interacting with the legal system (2):** including child care, access to lawyers and transportation.
- **Plain language for websites and materials (2)**
- **Remote hearings (2):** during COVID, the introduction of remote hearings is seen as a real benefit, especially for community members who may only need to be present for 15 minutes. This allowed participation, “without having to find childcare, take an entire day off more and miss a paycheck.”
- **Supreme court should standardize processes and procedures across all courts (1)**
- **Translation services (2)**

As summarized by one legal advocate, we have an “imperfect system. We’re doing our best to improve an unequal system. We wouldn’t think of telling the CEO of Cisco or Amazon to go to a website in order to respond to a patent infringement case. But if you’re poor, we’ll send you a packet of information and a website to help you respond to your eviction notice or collection notice. We are working in a two-tiered system of justice.”



Conclusion

The issues and suggestions raised in this summary report present multiple opportunities for reforming the processes of policymaking in Colorado's state government. Across all areas explored, barriers around lack of language access, lack of true community engagement and input, inconsistency and opacity of processes, and the need to have resources and relationships in order to navigate the policymaking processes were consistent themes.

In January 2022, all organizations contacted throughout this process were invited to engage in a collective follow-up conversation and debrief. Twenty-six individuals representing 17 organizations were in attendance. Some had participated in the interviews and some were engaging in the conversation for the first time. There was agreement that the barriers identified in the summary report strongly resonated with organizations' experiences with Colorado's state government institutions. Participants also reflected that while we have a very strong nonprofit sector in Colorado, there is a need to better resource organizations working to advance policies that support health equity and racial justice.

During this collective conversation, many participants recommended that these barriers to engagement in the policymaking process should be summarized and shared with policymakers in the short-term. While participants agreed that work in any of the areas would have potential for impact, there was no clear consensus yet on which may have the greatest effect to create more equitable policymaking processes. However, there was unanimous agreement that the processes themselves matter and are worthy of reexamination and reform.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: THANK YOU TO THE ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS WHO GENEROUSLY SHARED THEIR TIME AND EXPERTISE IN THESE CONVERSATIONS.

9to5 Colorado
Bell Policy Center
Centro Humanitario
Colorado AFL-CIO
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable
Colorado Common Cause
Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado Legal Services
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights
Community Resource Center
Engaged Latino Parents Advancing Student Outcomes (ELPASO)
Good Business Colorado

Healthier Colorado
Justice and Mercy Legal Aid Center
(a program of Mile High Ministries)
Mental Health Center of Denver
Movimiento Poder
(formerly Padres & Jóvenes Unidos)
New Era Colorado
One Colorado
The Colorado Health Foundation
The Center for African American Health United for a New Economy
Urban Peak Young Invincibles

CHF Contributing Authors:

Sara Monge
Alexis Weightman

About the Colorado Health Foundation:

The Colorado Health Foundation is bringing health in reach for all Coloradans by engaging closely with communities across the state through investing, policy advocacy, learning and capacity building. For more information, please visit www.coloradohealth.org.



www.facebook.com/coloradohealth



www.twitter.com/cohealthfdn



www.instagram.com/cohealthfdn



www.youtube.com/coloradohealth



The Colorado Health Foundation™