

Reforming Policymaking in Colorado: Short Summary of Recommendations from Advocates

The Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) is the state's largest private philanthropy and works statewide to bring good health and well-being in reach for everyone who calls Colorado "home." So much of our health is influenced by our individual choices, our neighborhoods as well as 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.

What we've heard so far from advocacy organizations about Colorado's policymaking process:

In 2021, CHF policy staff began exploring what specific policies become law in Colorado and the underlying *how*. How do the daily ins and outs of introducing, crafting and implementing policy decisions have an impact on which voices tend to have the greatest influence on policy outcomes in our state? Interviews were completed with 25 organizations that engage in advocacy work.

Topics explored included: state legislature; administrative rulemaking; judicial system; and statewide ballot measures. This fact sheet contains responses about the state legislature and administrative rulemaking. However, the full summary reports and description of methodology are available at:

<https://coloradohealth.org/studies-reports>.

Process and procedural changes that could be considered in the near term for the state legislature:

- Clarify roles of committees
- Eliminate the filibuster
- Eliminate legislative term limits: 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
- Enforce five bill limit for legislators
- Improve scheduling: Including both the enforcement of advance agenda posting as well as scheduling more reasonable hours for hearings.
- Keep remote testimony: 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: 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
- Provide child care, meals and transportation for those testifying
- Provide training and resources for legislators: 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: Participation in the legislative process should not be limited to those who speak English.



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- **Require community outreach:** 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:** 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:** This was one solution offered to allow more genuine and regular dialogue and exchange of ideas.
- **Strengthen the pipeline for leadership from community:** 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:** make it more transparent to identify on which bills lobbyists are working.

Process and procedural changes that could be considered in the near term for administrative rulemaking:

- **Better enforce existing public meeting law requirements:** There should be stronger requirements around notifying the public about rulemaking activity and hearings.
- **Consolidate boards:** 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:** 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:** 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:** 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.
- **Improve community engagement and equity work:** There was acknowledgment that agencies need to do a better job engaging community voices. Several 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:** 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.

Contact: Alexis Weightman, senior government affairs manager: aweightman@coloradohealth.org or 303.953.3659

