



The Colorado Health Foundation

Transforming State Governance: Summary of Recommendations

JULY 2023, REVISED JULY 2025

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, the condition of our neighborhoods, and the public policies that govern our lives. We believe all Coloradans should have the tools and opportunities to be healthy where they live and have a voice in the decisions that impact them.

In 2021, CHF policy staff began exploring the underlying how behind which policies become law in Colorado:

How do the daily procedures 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? CHF completed interviews with 25 organizations that engage in advocacy work, 19 current and former legislators, legislative staff and lobbyists, and 17 current and former representatives from state agencies and rulemaking boards, as well as others outside of state government who frequently interact with the rulemaking process.

These conversations highlighted both positive aspects of how Colorado’s legislature and rulemaking entities currently operate and meaningful opportunities to create more inclusive engagement and access to these policymaking processes. Suggestions ranged from longer-term structural modifications to state government institutions – to more immediately implementable changes to the practices and procedures that policymakers follow. A brief summary of these ideas is included below. Full reports are available at: <https://coloradohealth.org/studies-reports>.



Suggested Changes to Colorado Legislative Processes

The legislative branch of state government is tasked with passing and modifying laws. In Colorado, the annual legislative session runs for 120 days and covers both the creation of new laws as well as the setting of the state's budget. Our General Assembly is comprised of 100 members who are elected by the public. The House of Representatives has 65 members who are elected to serve up to four two-year terms and the Colorado Senate has 35 members who are elected to serve up to two four-year terms.

Shorter Term Changes

- ✔ Clarify roles of legislative committees
- ✔ Enforce a five bill limit for legislators
- ✔ Improve processes, engagement and transparency around the state budget
- ✔ Improve scheduling during session
- ✔ Keep and strengthen remote testimony
- ✔ Modify how demographic and fiscal notes are used
- ✔ Place limits on paid lobbyists
- ✔ Provide translation services
- ✔ Require community outreach on all bills
- ✔ Require in-person attendance for legislators
- ✔ Restructure SMART Act hearings
- ✔ Strengthen/enforce existing bill processes
- ✔ Strengthen the caucusing system
- ✔ Utilize interim committees more effectively

Longer Term Changes

- ✔ Capacity building and technical assistance for advocacy organizations
- ✔ Eliminate the filibuster
- ✔ Increase staffing of Joint Budget Committee
- ✔ Increase media presence at capitol
- ✔ Increase transparency (so it is clear who is promoting certain bills)
- ✔ Increase legislator and legislative staff pay
- ✔ Make the capitol building more accessible and culturally relevant
- ✔ Modify/restructure the legislative calendar
- ✔ Modify/restructure the annual budget cycle
- ✔ Provide child care, meals and transportation for those testifying
- ✔ Provide more training and resources for new legislators
- ✔ Promote bipartisanship
- ✔ Require equity impact analysis for all bills
- ✔ Repeal or modify legislator term limits
- ✔ Revise campaign finance laws
- ✔ Strengthen the pipeline for leadership (staff and policymakers) from community
- ✔ Strengthen the Secretary of State Website



Suggested Changes to Colorado Rulemaking Processes

Administrative rulemaking is one of the most consequential – and complex – policymaking processes in Colorado. Whereas legislation often provides a broad outline for a particular policy, rulemaking is where the specific contours of that policy truly take shape. In Colorado, rulemaking occurs across a broad range of state boards and commissions. No two processes are exactly the same, and experiences largely depend on the composition and practices of individual boards and state agencies.

Shorter Term Changes

- ✔ Better enforce existing public meeting law requirements
- ✔ Consolidate boards
- ✔ Diversify boards' membership and improve operation of boards
- ✔ Increase transparency and consistency across agencies, departments and task forces
- ✔ Improve community engagement and equity work of boards and commissions
- ✔ Increase transparency around board and commission appointments
- ✔ Provide additional training and support for board members
- ✔ Provide translation services
- ✔ Require intentional outreach to communities impacted by rulemaking
- ✔ Standardize formats and procedures across boards

Longer Term Changes

- ✔ Create a singular access point for advocacy partners to access regulatory expertise
- ✔ Create centralized, independent coordinating bodies to support public access and standardized practices
- ✔ Education, training and outreach for the public on rulemaking
- ✔ Increase accessibility and consistency of rulemaking entities
- ✔ Increase accountability between branches of government
- ✔ Increase independence of boards from state agencies
- ✔ Increase support for nonprofits to navigate rulemaking processes
- ✔ Reduce bureaucracy
- ✔ Reform state procurement processes
- ✔ Strengthen rulemaking standardization and equitable engagement through improved statutory guidance

Considerations

The ideas and suggestions captured through these conversations present an opportunity for our state to assess the status quo of how policies are made and implemented and consider changes that could make the processes more equitable to the benefit of all Coloradans. While all of these ideas have merit, CHF is looking to advocate for the ones that will have the biggest impact on elevating the voices of Coloradans who have historically had less power and privilege in spaces where policy decisions are made. We welcome further conversation, engagement and partnership around the ideas raised during these interviews.

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



The Colorado Health Foundation™