



# Youth Healthcare Alliance

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Champions for Colorado School-Based Clinics

Formerly known as Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care

## 2020 Colorado Legislative Summary

We knew that the 2020 legislative session would be an exciting one, but we did not know just how exciting! The legislative session was interrupted by COVID-19 in March, and when legislators reconvened in May, the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 lockdowns and the police brutality protests both added a different tone to the session. The legislature concluded their business for 2020 in mid-June. What follows is our take on the session and how our advocacy benefited Colorado's school-based clinics and populations we serve.

### Items Youth Healthcare Alliance Supported with Success

- **School-Based Health Center Program Funding in CDPHE's budget** - \$5.2 million from the state general fund supports operating grants for 52 of 63 school-based clinics around Colorado. With the budget shortfall related to the COVID-19 economic disruption, we were concerned that this program would experience cuts. Thanks to our tireless advocacy and stories that you all shared, legislators decided to preserve this program for the July 2020-June 2021 state fiscal year.
- **[HB 1411](#) – Behavioral Health Funding from CARES**- \$1.1 million will be allocated to assist CDPHE in bulk-purchasing opiate antagonists and to add more funding for state-funded school-based clinics. The funding is intended to boost behavioral health (mental health and substance use) supports, though the funding is time-limited and must be spent before the year's end. This is the only CARES federal funding that specifically went to school-based clinics. CDPHE will be managing this funding and will be releasing details soon.
- **[SB 163](#) – School Entry Immunization**- This bill is intended to boost immunizations at the time of school entry and formalize the process of non-medical exemptions, with the hope of increasing Colorado's immunization rates.
- **[SB 212](#) – Reimbursement for Telehealth Services**- This bill makes permanent some of the COVID-related emergency rule-making to allow providers who could not previously bill Medicaid for telehealth to do so at this time, including federally qualified health centers and

rural health centers. This means that FQHC-sponsored school-based clinics will be able to continue to do their telehealth services and bill Medicaid.

- [HB 1001](#) – **Nicotine Product Regulation**- The minimum age for legal purchasing of nicotine products will increase from 18 to 21, every retailer will have to be licensed, and new retail locations will have to be located more than 500 feet from a school.
- [HB 1427](#) – **Cigarette Tobacco and Nicotine Products Tax**- This bill came in the final days of the legislative session and will create a ballot issue for voters to approve whether they want to raise the Colorado tobacco tax and create a new tax on other nicotine products previously untaxed. Revenue from the taxes will be distributed to fund health care, tobacco education, preschool, and other programs. This will be on the ballot in November 2020.
- [HB 1420](#) – **Tax Fairness Act**- This bill was a direct response to the economic downturn and the revenue shortfall that the state faced, triggering some damaging and serious cuts to important programs for all Colorado's communities. This bill closed tax deductions and changed business income tax requirements so Colorado could generate more revenue. It also extended Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for low-income Coloradans. The revenue from this bill would support the public education budget.
- [SB 217](#) – **Police Accountability**- This bill was a direct response to the protests occurring in Denver and around the nation after several black people (namely George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and more) were killed. The bill increases accountability for police, such as removing qualified immunity for officers implicated in violence and limiting excessive use of force. Youth Healthcare Alliance took a position on this bill as police brutality is connected to racist violence and trauma in the communities we care for every day.
- [SB 215](#) – **Health Insurance Affordability Enterprise**- This bill continues a fee on health plans that was set to expire from the federal government and will now be managed at the state level. The revenue will fund the state reinsurance program (which will make insurance more affordable), subsidize premiums for low-income individuals not on Medicaid or public coverage, and support outreach and enrollment for health care.
- [SB 14](#) – **Excused Absences for Mental Health- Excused Absences in Public Schools For Behavioral Health**- This bill allows for students to take an extended or a temporary excused absence from their public school for behavioral health needs.

## Items that Youth Healthcare Alliance Supported Unsuccessfully

- [HB 1086](#) – **Insurance Coverage Mental Health Exam**- This bill would have added a 1-time-a-year mental wellness exam as a required covered benefit into private insurance plans.
- [HB 1092](#) – **Reimbursement to Federally Qualified Health Centers**- This effort was abandoned in favor of SB 212 (referenced above) which was more expansive and reflected more of what had occurred during COVID-19.
- [HB 1319](#) – **Prohibit Sale of Flavored Nicotine Products**- This bill would have banned the sale of flavored nicotine products in an attempt to curtail use of vaping products, especially among youth. This bill did not pass this year; however, we anticipate it will return next year.

- **[SB 001](#) – Expand Behavioral Health Training For K-12 Educators-** This bill would have offered an optional behavioral health training for teachers. We anticipate continued conversation about this for the future.

Thank you to Colorado’s legislators, the Youth Healthcare Alliance team, our lobbyist Jon Labadie at Mendez Barkis, our Youth Healthcare Alliance Policy Committee members, and our partners for the great work this session! We couldn’t have done it without you. If you are interested in joining the Youth Healthcare Alliance Policy Committee or have any questions or thoughts about our work this year, please reach out to [Aubrey](#).