



Board of County Commissioners

MEMORANDUM

To: Boulder County Board of County Commissioners
From: Cindy Copeland, Summer Laws, Nick Robles, and Mark Ruzzin
Date: November 27, 2023
RE: Adoption of Boulder County's 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities

INTRODUCTION

The Commissioners' Office Policy Team is requesting board consideration and adoption of Boulder County's 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities.

Adoption of the 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities will formalize a focused set of county positions regarding legislation and other public policy issues expected to be considered in the near-term by the Colorado General Assembly. These policy and budget priorities are of primary importance to Boulder County and its residents and outline a series of positions in respect to the state budget and the general fiscal health of the State of Colorado.

PRIORITIES DEVELOPMENT

The 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities were developed over the course of the summer and fall of 2023. In compiling potential state legislative and budget priorities for the commissioners' review, Policy Team staff solicited input from the commissioners, county staff, community partners, and external stakeholders; engaged with the legislative priority-setting work of organizations in which the county is a member; and closely followed the work of numerous legislative interim committees.

The draft priorities were vetted against a number of criteria, including their relevance to adopted county policy goals; the potential impact of the issue to Boulder County residents and its potential to advance racial equity; whether the issue will be considered by the General Assembly in the 2024 legislative session; and the viability or likelihood of achieving the policy priority. The legislative and budget priorities cover a broad range of public policy issues and look to capture new opportunities or reduce barriers to better serving the residents of Boulder County.

Claire Levy County Commissioner **Marta Loachamin** County Commissioner **Ashley Stolzmann** County Commissioner

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PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION

Through coordination with the Policy Team, the 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities will be used by the county commissioners and staff to inform the county positions that may be taken on active state legislation and guide any advocacy strategies that are developed to support those positions. The 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities will guide Boulder County's state legislative advocacy work and can serve as a reference tool for the county's state legislators as they consider legislation that may impact Boulder County.

Staff intends to regularly update the BOCC on all lobbying activities that the county engages with in respect to state legislation. It is expected that, from time to time, BOCC participation or the participation of county staff will be beneficial to supporting county advocacy efforts. This participation will be planned and organized in as timely a fashion as possible, given the fast-paced nature of the state legislative process.

ACTION REQUESTED

Staff is asking the Board of County Commissioners to adopt the 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities.

Attachment:

2024 Boulder County State Legislative and Budget Priorities

2024



BOULDER COUNTY STATE LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET PRIORITIES

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

Claire Levy *County Commissioner*

Marta Loachamin *County Commissioner*

Ashley Stolzmann *County Commissioner*

LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

Boulder County's state legislative and budget priorities adhere to the following Legislative Principles, which guide the development of the positions the county takes on state legislation:

Racial Equity: Boulder County supports the creation and adoption of fully inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive policies. As elected officials and employees, we have a responsibility to interrupt institutional racism which manifests through racist policy, practices, and behaviors. We are dedicated to eliminating systemic discrimination of people in all protected classes. We address racism at its root and review all state legislation through a lens of racial equity and strive to solicit the voices and perspectives of those historically excluded from the legislative process.

Climate Action and Environmental Justice: Boulder County is committed to protecting and enhancing our environment for generations to come. As elected officials and employees, we advance strategies that promote sustainability, address the climate crisis, protect our open lands, and improve air quality. We make decisions and promote policies that address the inequitable impacts of the climate crisis and pollution.

Financial and Organizational Stewardship: Boulder County is dedicated to the effective use of taxpayer funds through efficient service delivery and integration of public programs and services to achieve equitable outcomes. As elected officials and employees, we engage in collaborative efforts with local, regional, and statewide partner agencies, including state budget and fiscal decisions that impact our organization or our constituents. We advocate for a reformed state revenue structure that can respond to changing economic conditions, including reforms to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights and Amendment 23.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Following are Boulder County's priorities for the 2024 state legislative session, including references to legislation that we anticipate will be introduced in the General Assembly. We ask for our delegation members' support for these bills that are important to Boulder County and our shared constituents.

CLIMATE ACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Air Quality and Ozone Reduction: Support state legislation, regulation, and other policy means to improve air quality and public health. Expected legislation includes air permit reform to strengthen analyses for minor pollution sources; improved enforcement to discourage permit violators, refinery specific legislation; and emissions reduction measures. A key focus of these bill concepts is to protect low-income communities and communities of color.

Environmental Justice: Support legislation implementing the General Assembly’s Environmental Justice Task Force recommendations and adding staffing and resources to expand petroleum refinery oversight and regulations to decrease air pollution and protect heavily impacted vulnerable communities located near refineries.

Distribution System Planning: To address barriers to electrification such as utility rates, support legislation to require any public utility with a Distribution System Plan to develop and implement a Clean Distribution System Plan to meet greenhouse gas targets and create increased access to electrification.

Local and Regional Airports: Support legislation requiring local and regional airports to implement sustainability and noise mitigation programs in order to receive state funding.

Waters of the United States: Support legislation to create a state-level permitting regime to ensure that the State of Colorado can adequately regulate the state’s water resources and preserve the environmental systems benefits of these resources.

PERA Proxy Voting: Support legislation to require PERA to adopt proxy voting procedures that ensure PERA’s voting decisions align with and are supportive of Colorado’s statutory greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Gun Violence Prevention: Support legislation to prevent gun violence and save lives through an assault weapons ban and other gun violence prevention measures.

Youth Substance Use Disorder Prevention: Support efforts to prevent and reduce youth substance use disorder and death from substance use, including preventing the sale of these substances to youth via social media platforms.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE

Behavioral Health Diversion: Support policies to divert people with behavioral health disorders involved in the criminal justice system to behavioral health treatment, such as the program outlined in the Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Interim Committee treatment bill. Support enhanced funding for other community-based sentencing options for low-level offences.

EQUITY

Marriage Equality and Parental Rights: Support efforts to codify marriage equality in Colorado and full parental rights for non-biological parents in same-sex relationships.

GOVERNANCE

Local Government Fiscal Notes: Support legislation to enact local government fiscal notes to account for the full financial impacts of legislation in communities across Colorado.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Gender Affirming Care: Support legislation to ensure youth in Colorado have access to gender-affirming care.

Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders: Support legislation that funds services for prevention, treatment, and recovery from substance use disorders, including harm reduction approaches.

HOUSING

Affordable Housing: Support policy and funding initiatives to increase Colorado’s stock of permanently affordable housing and expand access to diverse housing options.

Land Use: Support efforts to increase access to affordable housing, affordable transit, and home ownership opportunities in Colorado through land use reform strategies, including local government inclusionary zoning requirements, expanding residential uses in commercial, retail, and office zones, and other strategies.

Local Government Land Use Regulation: Support policy and funding initiatives to require local governments to provide expedited entitlement and permit processing for affordable housing developments and encourage local governments to reduce, defer, off-set, or waive development and impact fees for affordable housing developments.

Home Ownership: Support efforts and taxing structures that disincentivize vacant and second homes as strategies to expand home ownership and wealth-building opportunities for first-time home buyers.

Mobile Homes: Support legislation that modernizes the Mobile Home Park Act and ensures that people renting-to-own manufactured homes are protected against predatory loan practices.

Support policy initiatives to ensure that the rights of people living in manufactured homes are protected.

Supportive Housing Services: Support consideration of a Section 1115 Medicaid waiver to provide access to Medicaid funding in support of homelessness prevention initiatives.

HUMAN SERVICES

Access to Benefits: Support efforts to ensure ease of access to public benefits, including food assistance, by aligning eligibility across programs, increasing funding for outreach and enrollment, reducing documentation burdens, streamlining administrative processes, and ensuring adequate staffing to administer benefits.

Child Welfare: Support funding and policy to address racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability equity in the child welfare system, and increase support for foster care homes that serve children with a range of needs, including financial support for kinship care.

LANGUAGE JUSTICE

Language Access: Support funding and policy that guarantees full language access and language justice in all spheres of life, including but not limited to language access in the child welfare system, professional licensing processes, and the early childhood care system.

OIL AND GAS

Forced Pooling: Support legislation to enhance protections for publicly held mineral rights.

Stripper Well Taxation: Support legislation to repeal the state severance tax exemption for oil and gas stripper wells.

TRANSPORTATION

Road User Safety Improvements: Support policy and funding initiatives to invest in transportation system infrastructure improvements that seek to prevent vehicular collisions with vulnerable road users.

Vehicle Miles Traveled Fees or Taxes: Support new, broad-based revenue sources to supplement and ultimately replace gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, including Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) fees and taxes.

Transit Use: Support tools such as tax credit incentives and grant programs to incentive provision of transit passes and increase the use of transit.

Railroad Safety Requirements: Support policy and funding initiatives to increase railroad safety as Colorado develops passenger rail service, including efforts to support the creation of railroad quiet zones.

STATE BUDGET PRINCIPLES

Boulder County recognizes the importance of a state government that is fiscally responsible. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the administration and General Assembly on development of the state budget, especially regarding policies and programs that affect our organization or our constituents. To that end, Boulder County supports:

- Including adequate funding for staffing and administrative costs for statutorily required programs, reforms, and services that will be implemented at the county level.
- Increasing fees for fee-funded programs, where appropriate, to address state staffing and other program needs, and requiring industries and polluters to pay for the costs of regulating those sectors.

STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

In the development of the FY 2024-2025 state budget, Boulder County asks for the support of the General Assembly in maintaining or increasing appropriation levels for the following important areas.

AGING

Home and Community Based Services: Support funding to ensure essential services for people aging in place and children and adults with disabilities, including the Governor’s budget request (\$53 million) to increase wages of direct care workers.

AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

Improved Air Quality: Support the Governor’s budget request (\$14 million) for funding for programs that reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and implement and enforce environmental justice initiatives.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Local Public Health Agencies: Local Public Health Agencies such as Boulder County Public Health are the backbone of preventative health programming across Colorado. Boulder County supports the Governor’s budget request (\$15 million) to continue investment in Colorado’s public health infrastructure.

COMMUNITY AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

Preventing Youth Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System: Support continued funding for the IMPACT Partnership, preventing involvement of children and young people in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Competency: Support the Governor’s budget request (\$75 million) to reduce the state’s competency waitlist and comply with the consent decree, ensuring that people involved in the criminal justice system receive the competency services they need.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Equitable Access to Early Childhood Care and Preschool: Support efforts to increase access to affordable high quality early childhood care and preschool, including supporting early childhood care providers and enhancing the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program.

EDUCATION

Teacher Pay: Support increased school finance funding to ensure teachers in Colorado are compensated at a level to improve recruitment and retention.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Strengthen Enforcement and Compliance: Support the Governor’s budget request (\$6.1 million) for increased air, water, and hazardous waste enforcement and compliance efforts to protect historically disadvantaged communities.

FOOD SECURITY

Food Access: Support funding and other efforts to ensure equitable food access for children and adults in Colorado as food prices and other basic living costs continue to rise.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Early Childhood: Support the Governor’s budget request (\$0.3 million) to continue the bilingual early childhood care provider program at the Colorado Department of Early Childhood.

HOUSING

Affordable Housing: Support the Governor’s budget request (\$35 million) to provide funding for affordable housing tax credits and infrastructure funding for transit-oriented community housing.

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Access to Care and Child Welfare Placements for Children and Youth with High Acuity Behavioral Health

Needs: Support the Child Welfare System Interim Committee High Acuity Crisis for Children and Youth bill and Governor’s budget request (\$29 million) to increase access to high levels of care and child welfare placements for children and youth.

TRANSPORTATION

Transit-Oriented Communities: Support the Governor’s budget package that includes funding to incentivize the development of transit-oriented communities and increased funding for transit.

Fare Free Transit During Ozone Season and Free Fares for Youth: Support the Governor’s budget request (\$14 million) to provide permanent funding for free transit services to improve air quality and increase youth access to transit.



Boulder County 2024 State Legislative and Budget Priorities

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