



COLORADO FISCAL
POLICY INSTITUTE

727 E. 16th Ave., Main Suite • Denver, Colorado 80203

303-573-5669 • 303-573-4947 | Fax • www.cclponline.org

Justice and Economic Security for all Coloradans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

Press Contacts:

Scott Downes 303-573-5669 ext. 306

NEW REPORT: Colorado falling behind in critical public investments **State trails per capita U.S. average by \$3.3 billion in key areas like education, health care**

Denver, CO—The Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute (COFPI) released a new report today exploring how Colorado continues to fall behind other states in key areas of public investment such as K-12 education, health care, transportation and higher education. The report, *Aiming for the Middle*, details how much it would cost to elevate Colorado from its currently poor state rankings to the middle of the pack in these aforementioned areas.

“Colorado is a wonderful and amazing place in so many ways, yet we continue to lag behind other states when it comes to investing in our future,” said Carol Hedges, Senior Fiscal Policy Analyst at COFPI. “Other states are making important decisions to fix their problems, to stay competitive, and to invest in their future. We’re not doing that, and sooner or later it’s going to catch up with us.”

“This report reinforces what we already suspected: that Colorado is falling behind,” said Ken Delay, Executive Director of Colorado Association of School Boards. “To create the kind of future we want for our children, we need to reassess how we invest in our schools and our students.”

According to the report, Colorado would need to increase annual spending by more than \$3.3 billion to move to the middle of its peers in terms of per capita investment in critical public services. In these four areas of vital public services, Colorado lags behind compared to almost every other state:

Elementary and Secondary Schools:

- Colorado ranks between 34th and 47th in per capita investment in public education
- \$672.5 million to reach the per capita U.S. average

Children’s Health and Medicaid:

- Colorado ranks 49th in covering low income families and other uninsured under Medicaid
- \$1 billion to reach the per capita U.S. average

College Opportunity:

- Colorado ranks 48th in per capita spending on higher education
- \$467 million to reach the per capita U.S. average for public colleges and universities

Transportation and Highways:

- Colorado ranks 39th in state highway spending per capita
- \$139 million to reach the per capita U.S. average for highway spending

“These numbers are not a policy prescription, but rather a benchmark to show where we are at compared to other states and to jumpstart the public debate about our priorities,” added Hedges.

“In Colorado, citizens have a uniquely powerful role in shaping budget and fiscal policy,” said Lisa Weil, Policy Director of Great Education Colorado. “This report will help prepare us for that responsibility, helping us understand the stakes, recognize the challenges, and develop real world solutions.”

“State spending reflects our core values, and demonstrates the level of commitment Coloradans have to important issues like health care,” said Dede de Percin, Executive Director of the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative. “We need to make careful choices in order to invest in our future and the next generations.”

The Executive Summary of the report is attached.

Both the summary and the full report are available at www.cclponline.org.

Additional Note: Aiming for the Middle includes two different ways to compare spending—state spending per capita and state spending per \$1000 of personal income. Likewise, the report includes two different ways to compare the “middle”—the 25th ranked state out of fifty and the U.S. average. While these different calculations are included in the report, both the above examples and the Executive Summary include just per capita spending and the U.S. average.