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To: Scott Downes

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March 2008

CCLP's Policy Matters

Colorado Center on Law and Policy/Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute

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CCLP/COFPI Reports

EITC Update: Support HB 1362!

Broad coalition pushes tax relief for Colorado working families

On Thursday, March 13, Rep. John Kefalas and Sen. Betty Boyd introduced a H.B. 1362 to restore the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which would provide direct relief to 264,000 tax-filers and pump \$52 million into the Colorado economy. "The goal here, in my mind, is to make an economy that works for everyone," said Rep. Kefalas. "The goal is to make sure that folks who are playing by the rules, living paycheck to paycheck, that they have an opportunity to move toward self-sufficiency to get beyond poverty."

The bill is expected to be considered in the House Finance Committee as soon as next week.

[Channel 4 Story \(Video\)](#)

[Channel 9 Story \(Video\)](#)

[Associated Press article](#)

[Rocky Mountain News article](#)

- [State of Working Colorado 2007](#)
- [2008 COFPI Budget Primer](#)
- [2008 Colorado Self-Sufficiency Tables](#)

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New Report: What it takes to make ends meet in Colorado

Update on the Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard

On Wednesday, March 19, COFPI released a new report, *The 2008 Colorado Self-Sufficiency Study: A Family Needs Budget*, detailing what it takes for families to make ends meet on a county-by-county basis. Special guest speaker, State Treasurer Cary Kennedy, joined a broad coalition of advocates, service providers, public officials, and other community members to launch both the report, as well as a newly created online tool called VisionKEI.

"Stagnant wages and rising costs leave more and more families struggling," said Maureen Farrell, Executive Director, Colorado Center on Law and Policy. "We need smart policies, like the state Earned Income Tax Credit, to help more Coloradans break out of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency."

COFPI is also launching VisionKEI, which is an interactive online tool that easily calculates self-sufficiency thresholds based on family size and geography. Service providers, employers, and citizens can now conveniently access a vast array of data to help increase knowledge and strengthen public policies that move people toward self-sufficiency.

"VisionKEI, the online self-sufficiency calculator, is about knowledge, empowerment, and independence," added Tracey Stewart, Self-Sufficiency Project Coordinator at COFPI. "It's a gateway to determining what a family needs to be self-sufficient and how they can get there."

[Executive Summary](#)

[Full Report](#)

[VisionKEI Online Tool](#)

[Complete Self Sufficiency Tables](#)

Medicaid Regulations: Feds take another swipe at states, health care service

CCLP leads effort to stop cuts in services, funding

CCLP led the effort to send a letter, with nearly 50 signatures, to members of Colorado's congressional delegation voicing strong opposition to a series of new or proposed federal Medicaid regulations that would severely restrict funding and cut services for low-income, indigent, and medically vulnerable communities. In Colorado, the regulations would mean a loss of \$142 million in federal dollars in the first year of implementation, and nearly an \$800 million cut over five years.

These federal regulations would harm some of the most vulnerable people in our state, and jeopardize their access to critical services. This includes children with developmental disabilities, foster children, kids who access health care at school, people transitioning back to the community from institutional care, and low-income uninsured people who received hospital care. Other examples include school transportation for children with special health needs, Colorado's indigent care program which serves 180,000 people, special education services, and federal funding for teaching hospitals.

Some regulations have already taken effect, others, which are currently under existing moratoria, will take effect in May and June. These kind of severe cuts in funding and services also seriously jeopardize any state efforts at comprehensive health care reform, as such reform is dependent on federal/state partnerships as well as public health care structures. CCLP and partnering organizations are urging Congress to issue moratoria on the regulations, or extend them for another year where they already exist.

For more information on the regulations, click here for a [fact sheet](#).

You can also contact Adela Flores-Brennan at 303- 573-5669 ext 313 or afbrennan@cclponline.org.

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform state-by-state report

COFPI Fiscal Analysis

Update on Long Bill and New Revenue Projections

Long Bill Overview This week, the Colorado House of Representatives passed the Long Bill, which authorizes a budget \$17.6 billion for state operations for Fiscal Year 2008-09, a 6.7 percent increase from the current year, FY 07-08. The budget proposal includes an 8.6 percent increase (\$64.6 million) for higher education, a 5 percent increase (\$152 million) for K-12 education, and a 4.7 percent increase (\$68.1 million) for state health care programs. Corrections is slated for an 8.3 percent increase (\$51.7 million). If the bill is passed and signed into law, the state will add 1,334 full-time employees to the ranks, most of which would be in corrections (268), higher education (524), and the courts (221). The bill moves to the Senate for consideration the week of March 31.

The FY 2008-2009 budget attempts to address key priorities in the state within the current fiscal construct. However, since policymakers are continually forced to make tough funding decisions based on Colorado's irrational fiscal restraints, it is difficult to make real progress on funding priorities. Lawmakers have little, if any flexibility to plan or prioritize, and they have to abide by budgeting rules that no family or business would ever place on themselves. Until the legislature pursues long-term fiscal reform to correct this barren fiscal landscape and strengthen the state in a meaningful way, Colorado will continue to lose ground.

Colorado currently lags far behind other states in key benchmarks: ranking 47th in per capita spending on K-12 education, 48th in higher education, 39th in transportation and highways, and 49th in providing health insurance for low-income families and other uninsured under Medicaid. To remain competitive and keep pace with other states, comprehensive fiscal reform will be needed.

Stay tuned for more in-depth analysis on the state budget from COFPI.

Revenue Projections Overview On March 20, 2008, Legislative Council presented the quarterly revenue projections for March 2008. The big news is a decrease in projected General Fund revenues of \$169.6 million for FY 2007-08 and \$148.6 million for FY 2008-09. General Fund revenue is now estimated to be \$7.7 billion in FY 2007-2008, and \$8.0 billion in FY 2008-2009, significantly lower than the December 2007 revenue projections.

The implications of these reduced General Fund estimates are most concentrated in transportation and capital construction.

The big question is whether the revenue reductions that were reflected in the March estimates were the beginning or the end of the downward revenue adjustments.

Complete Issue Brief on the March Revenue

Update on Bills Pertaining to Hospital Sale Transactions

Legislation moves forward in House, Senate

HB 1203 passed the Senate this week on third reading and now will either move to conference committee. HB 1203 requires the Attorney General to consider any lessening of access to health care services whenever determining whether to hold a public hearing on a hospital sale transaction. The Senate version makes clear that this bill would not apply to the current proposed sale of two Denver-area hospitals to a Catholic health care group, which would limit health care access in Jefferson and Boulder Counties. The House version is ambiguous on the matter.

SB 182, which would have required hospitals to notify in advance the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) of any proposed reduction in services, was killed in the Senate. However, administrative officials at CDPHE affirmed that they would review any hospital transfer to assure that the availability of reproductive health services is not reduced.

HB 1173, which would provide more flexibility and fewer constraints for fund management at charities and foundations, has also passed the Senate on third reading, and will now move into conference committee to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions.

Litigation to stop the proposed sale of two Denver- area Exempla hospitals remains pending in court in Denver and Boulder counties.

[Click here for continued updates on the Exempla case.](#)

Families USA Report: "Dying for Coverage in Colorado"

This week, Families USA released a new report, Dying for Coverage in Colorado, which finds that one person dies each day in Colorado because he or she does not have health care coverage. The report is the first-ever, state-specific report of its type, and is based on a groundbreaking national study by the Institute of Medicine, which in 2002 forged the direct link between a lack of health coverage and deaths from health-related causes.

[Press Release](#)

[Click here for Full Report](#)

Promotions

CCLP in the Media

In recent weeks, CCLP and COFPI staffers have been making the rounds in the press.

Tracey Stewart was featured in a [9News story](#) about the new self-sufficiency report, as well as articles in the [Denver Post](#) and [Fort Collins Coloradoan](#), and a Colorado Public Radio story.

Scott Downes was also quoted in a Denver Daily News story about the self-sufficiency report.

The Fort Collins Coloradoan applauded COFPI's work on the self-sufficiency report in this [editorial](#).

Elisabeth Arenales was quoted in a Denver Post [article](#) about the new federal Medicaid regulations, and also was featured in a Public News Service [interview](#), which was aired on more than 30 radio stations.

Elizabeth Feder was highlighted in a Colorado Confidential story about the new report from the Pay Equity Commission.

[Click here to read and hear interviews and stories.](#)

Grant Announcements

The Chambers Family Fund awarded \$75,000 to COFPI this month for continued work on outreach for the Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard.

The entire CCLP and COFPI team is deeply appreciative and tremendously grateful for the continued support from the Chambers Family Fund.

2008 Economic Self-Sufficiency Tables

The new 2008 Colorado Economic Self Sufficiency Standard Tables are now available on the Colorado Department of Local Affairs website. Click [here](#) to find out what it takes for your family to make ends meet in Colorado.

The Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard measures how much income is needed for a family of a given composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic yet needs-without public or private assistance. The Colorado standard measures this for 70 different family types in each of Colorado's 64 counties.

For more information about the tables and the Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard, please contact Tracey Stewart at 303-573-5669 ext. 314 or tstewart@cclponline.org.

Self-Sufficiency Tables

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