



2023

Federal Policy Priorities

About Colorado Hospital Association

Colorado Hospital Association (CHA) is the leading voice of Colorado's hospital and health system community. Representing more than 100 member hospitals and health systems throughout the state, CHA serves as a trusted, credible, and reliable resource on health issues, hospital data, and trends for its members, media, policymakers, and the general public. Through CHA, Colorado's hospitals and health systems work together in their shared commitment to improve health and health care in Colorado.



Workforce:

Colorado's health care and public health systems and their workforces have been pushed to their limits. Between 20-30 percent of health care workers have left the profession since the beginning of the pandemic, with another 20 percent considering leaving in the next few years. An analysis of Emsi data found that there will be a critical shortage of 3.2 million health care workers nationwide by 2026. **Colorado Hospital Association requests that the Colorado Congressional Delegation support short, medium, and long-term holistic approaches to workforce development by:**

- **Investing in wellness and support:** Build the resources necessary to support and retain the existing workforce, including through investments in health care workforce wellbeing.
- **Pursuing visa relief for foreign-trained health professionals:** Urge the U.S. Department of State to continue to prioritize immigrant visas for health care professionals; support the *Conrad State 30* and *Physician Access Reauthorization Act*.
- **Combatting health care workforce violence** through measures like the *Safety from Violence for Healthcare Employees (SAVE) Act* (H.R. 2584).
- **Prioritizing training, recruitment, and retention:** Use data on educational pathways, existing utilization, and unmet needs to think creatively and differently about pipeline programs to build a health care workforce that is stronger and more diverse for the future.
 - Invest in science, technology, engineering, and math education for K-12 students, and *Perkins Act* career and technical education programming;
 - Support the National Health Service Corps and the National Nurse Corps, which award scholarships and assist graduates of health professions programs with loan repayment in return for an obligation to provide health care services in underserved rural and urban areas, and invest in apprenticeship programs for lower-wage scale positions;
 - Fund nursing workforce development programs to support recruitment, retention, and advanced education for nurses;
 - Address faculty shortages that constrain the industry's ability to meet nursing needs by investing in nursing schools, nurse faculty salaries, and hospital training time; and
 - Reauthorize the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education program, which will expire at the end of fiscal year 2023.

Behavioral Health:

According to 2021 data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, only 34.69 percent of Colorado's mental health care needs are currently being met. Additionally, deaths from despair are on the rise across the nation.

To address these concerns, CHA supports:

- **Increasing pediatric mental health capacity through targeted measures.**
- **Strengthening mental health parity:** Improve enforcement of federal parity laws to ensure coverage for behavioral health benefits. This includes enhancing oversight of commercial plans, reducing administrative barriers, and increasing penalties for non-compliance.
- **Increasing access to inpatient treatment:** Eliminate barriers to treatment for patients in critical need by:
 - Repealing the Medicaid Institutions for Mental Disease exclusion, which prohibits the use of federal Medicaid funds to cover inpatient mental health services for patients aged 21 to 64 in certain freestanding psychiatric facilities.
 - Eliminating Medicare's 190-day lifetime limit for inpatient behavioral psychiatric admissions.

Hospital Sustainability:

A majority of Colorado hospitals operate with unsustainable financial situations at a time when expenses are up over 10 percent and operating margins are down 49 percent compared to pre-pandemic levels. **Below is a list of specific priority areas to support vulnerable Colorado hospitals:**

- **Protect the integrity of the 340B drug pricing program,** which continues to help eligible hospitals offer a wide range of important programs and services that benefit patients and advance health within their communities.
- **Identify a permanent solution to the critical access hospital 96-hour rule** that will endure beyond the end of the public health emergency. The inability to discharge patients is especially challenging due to limited post-acute options.
- **Invest in health care infrastructure to ensure the long-term viability of hospitals:** Communities with aging roads and utility systems also often struggle with aging health facilities, decades-old physical structures, and outdated digital and data infrastructures, which threatens access to care.
- **Implement measures to address hospital finances** such as targeted sequester relief for struggling hospitals, including vulnerable safety net and rural hospitals.
- **Support hospital preparedness measures and public health modernization in the upcoming *Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act*.**
- **Protect health care services, data, and patients from cyberattacks** while supporting efforts to increase government cybersecurity assistance, recruit additional cybersecurity workforce, improve medical device security, and improve information sharing.
- **Streamline prior authorization requirements** under Medicare Advantage plans.
- **Support a special statutory designation** for certain hospitals that serve marginalized urban communities.
- **Reject site-neutral payment policies** that do not recognize legitimate differences among provider settings – jeopardizing access to outpatient services and restricting patient access to certain sites of care.



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