Colorado Center on Law and Policy

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Governor's draconian budget cuts highlight urgent need for state income tax reform

Passing Amendment 87 would head off future cuts to vital services for Coloradans

DENVER, CO — November 2, 2026 — Colorado Center on Law and Policy (CCLP) denounces Governor Polis's 2027-2028 budget request and its $600 million in proposed cuts to Medicaid. CCLP urges the Governor's office not to balance the state budget on the backs of struggling Coloradans without addressing the underlying cause of Colorado's fiscal challenges—the irresponsible revenue restrictions of TABOR.

Described as "Building Opportunity, Ensuring Fiscal Responsibility," Governor Polis's budget request requires medical costs to increase at a rate no greater than the TABOR revenue cap rate. This ignores the cost drivers of care in Colorado—factors which include an aging population, continued post-COVID disability costs, and, notably, the dramatic federal cuts to state Medicaid programs enacted in H.R. 1.

"There is no health policy reason why Medicaid costs should rise at exactly the same rate as the TABOR limit," said Charlie Brennan, CCLP's Income and Housing Policy Director. "TABOR's misguided revenue constraint has no bearing on what it costs to deliver the health care services Coloradans need. This proposal instead sets the stage for services to be cut each year Medicaid costs rise faster than TABOR allows."

CCLP today rejects the failed leadership of the current administration, asserting that the clearest solution to address the increasing health care costs of Coloradans is to increase the revenue available to fund those costs. Amendment 87, on the ballots in tomorrow's elections, would strike at the root cause of this gap, by returning the state to a graduated income tax. This measure would lower taxes for 97% of Coloradans, while increasing state revenues via gradually increasing tax rates on incomes over $500,000 a year. The excess revenue from households making over $500,000 a year would be directly applied to health care, childcare and education priorities.

Unfortunately, even knowing that he would be proposing severe cuts across social safety nets, Governor Polis has spent the last few weeks actively fighting against Amendment 87, choosing

instead to prioritize the finances of his own centimillionaire class over the real needs of working Coloradans.

Governor Polis's Medicaid "rate slowing" is a cut by another name, requiring a mix of reduced services and reduced reimbursements to service providers. As we have seen in previous years of cuts, these reductions harm patients and health care providers alike. The downstream effects of these policy decisions are especially felt by rural communities and those least able to bear the false "sustainability" of this administration.

Annie Martínez, Chief Legal and Policy Officer at CCLP, issued the following statement: "The federal government has already devastated programs that help people meet their basic needs. By proposing further safety net cuts, especially to health care, while opposing Amendment 87, Governor Polis is choosing to protect the wealthiest from contributing their fair share while asking those with the least to absorb the harm. A budget is a statement of priorities. Governor Polis's budget shows his priorities to be far out of line from the priorities of Colorado families. Coloradans deserve a governor who fights for their care with the same conviction Polis brings to opposing tax increases on the wealthiest, and we will hold the next governor to that standard, too."

CCLP urges the next administration and all Coloradans to show more vision than the outgoing governor, by supporting Amendment 87. Our elected leaders must confront Colorado's revenue problems head on, instead of proposing ever-worsening cuts as an acceptable long-term strategy.

About Colorado Center on Law and Policy

Founded in 1998, Colorado Center on Law and Policy is an antipoverty organization advancing the rights of every Coloradan through research, legal advocacy, legislative advocacy, and coalition building. Driven by our core values of equity, integrity, strategic advocacy, collaboration, and community engagement, CCLP envisions a Colorado where everyone has what they need to succeed. Learn more at copolicy.org.