



2019 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP



Bills we supported

Total: 10

Passed: 8

Defeated: 2

State funds leveraged

\$1.7 million for child care tax credits for low income families

\$750,000 for eviction legal defense

\$463,000 for school lunch co-pays

\$281,000 for implementing the state climate action goals

\$194,000 to study paid family leave

\$169,000 to help schools buy food from Colorado producers

\$48,000 to limit criminal history inquiries for job applicants

Figures are for fiscal year 2020

Federal funds leveraged

\$3.2 million for school lunches

Progress in many areas, but work remains

The fast and furious pace of the 2019 session of the Colorado General Assembly caught many people by surprise. Although one party is in control of the legislature and governor's office, many bills faced significant debate and required compromise to attain passage in both chambers. Our advocacy priorities were no different. We continue to seek bipartisan and non-partisan solutions to meet the needs of our neighbors who experience hunger, poverty, and marginalization. Of the ten bills that we actively supported this session, eight of them passed, although several were amended significantly. Two of our bills did not make it to a final vote. Overall, this session moved Colorado several steps forward in addressing hunger, housing, and climate justice. This sheet offers a summary of the ten bills for which we advocated in the 2019 Colorado legislative session.

Hunger

We joined a large coalition to support **House Bill 1171** (Rep. Michaelson Jenet), which the Governor signed on May 10. The bill expands the School Lunch Protection Act to include grades 9-12, building on last year's expansion through middle school, with state funds covering the copay and the federal government reimbursing 7-to-1 for each reduced-price lunch served. This gives children in all grades access to the subsidy, ensuring that kids are fed and ready to learn.

We also supported **House Bill 1132** (Reps. Buentello/Pelton), which will incentivize schools to use Colorado-grown and raised food in their meal programs. Using Colorado producers reduces the carbon impact of transporting food long distances and connects kids to the land in their communities.

Economic Security

We supported **Senate Bill 188** (Sens. Winter/A. Williams), the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act. Rates of access to paid leave in Colorado are low, yet we know it is an important piece of economic security for people who need time to attend to serious medical needs or the birth of a child without risking the loss of a job or steady income. The bill experienced major debate among state Senators, but ultimately a funded program could not be agreed upon. The bill was amended to a study of paid leave and subsequently passed. We will continue to advocate for this important issue in the future.

One success story was **House Bill 1013** (Rep. Exum), which extends the child care expenses tax credit for low income families. The tax credit is equal to 25% of expenses incurred, up to a maximum of \$1,000.

Housing & Homelessness

Several significant housing-related bills were passed this session, including **House Bill 1118** (Reps. Jackson/Galindo) to increase the time period a tenant has to cure a minor lease violation. The goal is to reduce evictions and turnover for renters and landlords.

Senate Bill 180 (Sen. Winter) will establish an Eviction Legal Defense Fund to help address the imbalance in legal representation for tenants in eviction proceedings. Almost all landlords are represented in such proceedings, but less than 1% of tenants had legal counsel in a study of Denver evictions conducted in 2017.

One bill that did not pass was **Senate Bill 225** (Sens. Gonzales/Rodriguez), which would have allowed local governments to create programs to stabilize rent. Many municipalities have been asking for the legislature to extend this power to them. For now, the statewide preemption will remain in place.



Criminal Justice

The biggest disappointment for our advocacy work this session was the failure of **Senate Bill 182** (Sens. Gonzales/A. Williams), a bill to repeal the death penalty in Colorado. We had significant debate and conversation with legislators and many advocates took action on this issue, but we could not secure enough votes in the Senate. We will take up this issue again next year while building support in the interim.

One successful bill in this area was **House Bill 1025** (Reps. Melton/Herod) to limit inquiries into criminal history on an initial job application, also known as “Ban the Box.” We are very gratified to finally see this bill passed! Job applicants seeking to reintegrate into society will no longer face automatic screening because of their history.

Environmental Justice

We were thrilled to support the successful passage of **House Bill 1261** (Reps. Becker/Jackson) to implement concrete climate action goals to reduce pollution in Colorado. This will allow the Air Quality Control Commission to enact meaningful measures to control carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions.

God of justice and mercy, help us to live with faithfulness into all the opportunities you give us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen!

Thank you for your support and for joining us in advocacy!