

2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Lutheran
Advocacy
Ministry
Colorado

Governing is messy

The Colorado General Assembly finished up their 120 day session on May 9, 2023. With so many first-year lawmakers taking office, it was hard to predict what priorities would emerge amid the large one-party majority. While some bills found a relatively straightforward path, others were the subject of intense debate, scrutiny, and even filibuster. The legislature worked long hours into the evenings and even on multiple weekends, an unusual occurrence, and even then, could not come to an agreement about several high-profile bills. Despite all the challenges of a regular session, Lutheran Advocacy was in a good position to advocate faithfully and build relationships. We supported bills related to everything from housing, health care, and tax credits to immigration detention, food access, medical debt and more.

We took action on twelve priority bills this year. The overall aim of our advocacy agenda has remained evergreen, in that we seek bipartisan and non-partisan solutions to meet the needs of our neighbors experiencing poverty and hunger. We are excited to see that nine of the bills for which we advocated passed this year! This report offers a summary of the legislation for which we advocated in the 2023 session. Every step of the way, your voice and your advocacy mattered!

Ending Hunger

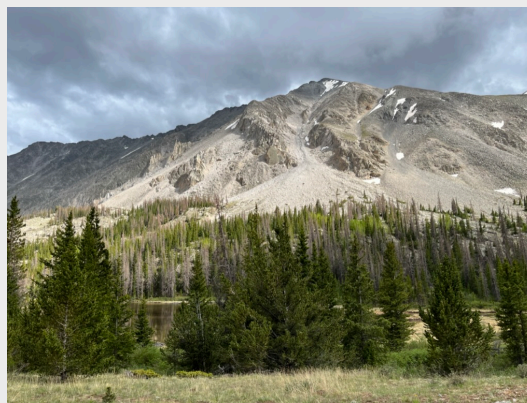
When Proposition FF was approved by Colorado voters last fall, we knew there would

Bills we supported

Total:

Passed: 9

Did Not Pass: 3



Fiscal impacts

\$115 million in meal reimbursements to school meal authorities for Healthy School Meals for All

\$75 million in tax credits to fund an expanded state Earned Income Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit plan

\$11.2 million in tax credits (FY 24-25) to incentivize purchases of electric powered lawn care equipment

\$1 million to provide grants to counties & food banks to buy food for low-income older adults

\$610,000 to fund healthy eating program incentives through state income tax credits

\$418,000 to equip the State Judicial Department to accept e-files for eviction cases so defendants can participate remotely

\$200,000 to study the effectiveness of removing medical debt from consumer credit reports

Figures are for fiscal year 23-24 except when noted

be implementation work to address. **Senate Bill 221** (Sens. Bridges & Zenzinger) was passed to create the fiscal & policy architecture to implement that measure, also known as “Healthy

School Meals For All". The bill's cost is already paid for by adjustments to Colorado's taxable income amounts.

House Bill 1008 (Rep. Weissman) will fund healthy eating program incentives through tax credits, and **House Bill 1158** (Reps. Willford & Taggart) will create the Colorado Commodity Supplemental Food Grant Program, which will support counties and food banks in providing meal packets to low-income older adults.

Poverty Reduction

The passage of **House Bill 1112** (Rep. Bird) will make significant changes for Colorado tax filers who claim the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. The amount of the federal credit that can be claimed on state returns will increase, and the child tax credit amount will also go up while preserving expanded eligibility.

The legislature also passed **House Bill 1126** (Rep. Ricks & Weinberg), which will prevent many kinds of medical debt from appearing on credit reports. This aids people who've accrued unavoidable debt for important medical care from facing additional obstacles due to poor credit.

Criminal Justice Reform

Eviction proceedings can be challenging for defendants, but **House Bill 1186** (Reps. Lindsey & Jodeh) will allow for remote participation in hearings. This will give people a better chance to defend themselves adequately if they can't physically travel to a courtroom location.

Access to Housing

In the fall, Colorado voters passed Proposition 123 to aid funding for affordable housing programs all over the state. **House Bill 1304** (Reps. McCluskie & Frizell) was passed to begin implementing some of the opportunities presented by that revenue. Importantly, it will also allow tribal governments to access the funding.

We supported two other housing-related bills which fell by the wayside. **House Bill 1115** (Reps. Mabrey & Velasco) would have repealed the prohibition on local residential rent stabilization programs, but was defeated in a Senate committee. And **House Bill 1171** (Reps. Mabrey & Gonzales-Gutierrez) would have required that just cause be established for residential evictions, but was laid over and thus not voted on at the end of session.

Public Health

We supported a proposal to analyze statewide publicly financed health care in **House Bill 1209** (Reps. Boesenecker & McCormick), but it was laid over in the Senate. We have supported several attempts over the years to gather data about public options for health care and insurance in Colorado, but continue to face headwinds from the health insurance industry and others.

Migrants & Refugees

The passage of **House Bill 1100** (Reps. Ricks & Garcia) means that local governments will be restricted from involvement with for-profit, private providers of immigration detention services. Such involvement has been shown to have a depressive effect on public safety, as immigrants lose trust in contacting police about crime or other issues.

Environment

Senate Bill 016 (Sen. Hansen) will enact measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, including a wide variety of pollution control measures and incentives. It will require certain large insurance companies to complete climate risk disclosure surveys, and increases our state's emission reduction goals.

God of justice and mercy, help us to see your faithfulness in all the opportunities you give us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen!

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