



2025 State Legislative & Budget Principles & Priorities

Boulder County, Colorado

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Legislative Principles

Boulder County's state legislative and budget priorities adhere to the following Legislative and Budget Principles, which guide the development of the positions the county takes on state legislation:

Racial Equity: Boulder County is committed to creating and adopting fully inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive policies. We have a responsibility to interrupt institutional racism which manifests through racist policy, practices, and behaviors. We are dedicated to eliminating systemic discrimination against people in all protected classes. We address racism at its root and review all state legislation through a lens of racial equity and strive to solicit the voices and perspectives of those historically excluded from the legislative process.

Climate Action and Environmental Justice: Boulder County is dedicated to protecting and enhancing our environment for generations to come. We advance strategies that promote sustainability, address the climate crisis, protect our open lands, and improve air quality. We make decisions and promote policies that address the inequitable impacts of the climate crisis and pollution.

Financial and Organizational Stewardship: Boulder County is focused on the effective use of taxpayer funds through efficient service delivery and integration of public programs and services to achieve equitable outcomes. We engage in collaborative decision-making efforts with local, regional, and statewide partner agencies to advocate for county priorities in the state budget and concerning fiscal decisions that will impact our organization and our constituents.

In recent years, multiple circumstances have placed unprecedented stress on the budget of Colorado's local governments, especially those funded primarily by property taxes, including counties. Multiple property tax bills that have reduced property tax revenues, the post-pandemic wind-down of American Rescue Plan Act funding, inflationary pressures on costs and wages, and a growing number of state mandates, many of which have not been funded, means local governments must do more with less even as we continue our efforts to steward our tax revenues as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The way forward will require collaboration between the state and its counties. In the spirit of partnership, Boulder County offers the following strategies that it asks the administration and General Assembly to consider as we move into a future of financial austerity:

- Include adequate funding for staffing and administrative costs associated with statutorily required programs, reforms, and services that will be implemented at the county level.
- Include adequate funding for any legislation that is expected to be implemented at the local level.
- Increase fees for fee-funded programs, as needed and where appropriate, to address local government and state government staffing and other program needs and require industries and polluters to pay for the costs of regulating those sectors.

- Expand the revenue-raising authorities of county governments to enable counties to provide adequate services to their communities.

Utilizing these strategies, Boulder County advocates for a flexible state revenue structure that can quickly respond to changing economic conditions, and which includes reforms to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights and any other constitutional and statutory barriers that implicate Colorado's revenue structure.

Legislative Priorities

Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship

Air Quality and Ozone Reduction: Support state legislation, regulation, and other policy means to improve air quality and public health. Boulder County supports policies that protect children’s developing lungs from the exacerbation of asthma and other lung diseases from exposure to diesel school bus pollution.

Environmental Justice & Justice40 Initiative: Support legislation that advances environmental justice in protecting our most vulnerable communities from disproportionate environmental burdens and that meets the federal government’s requirement that 40% of overall benefits flow to disadvantaged communities.

PERA Proxy Voting: Support legislation to require PERA to adopt proxy voting procedures that ensure PERA’s proxy voting decisions align with and are supportive of Colorado’s statutory greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

Buildings Emissions & Electrification: Buildings are responsible for a large portion of carbon emissions and other air pollution that impacts both outdoor and indoor air. Legislation enabling local governments to develop policies that reduce emissions from appliances in buildings and increase electrification is an important step forward in addressing this emissions sector. Utilities: Support on-bill repayment legislation or other similar repayment mechanisms to enable energy efficiency, electrification, and renewable energy upgrades without upfront costs, to make these solutions more accessible to homeowners and businesses.

Community Health

Gun Violence Prevention: Support legislation to prevent gun violence, including legislation to ban assault weapons.

Youth Substance Use Disorder Prevention: Support efforts to prevent and reduce youth substance use disorder and death from substance use, including prohibiting the sale of substances to youth via social media platforms.

Healthy School Meals for All: Support sustainable funding sources, outside of the Colorado General Fund, to ensure equal access to healthy school meals.

Community Justice

Diversion from the Juvenile and Criminal Justice System: Adequate resources and behavioral health services are essential in any efforts to divert people from the criminal and juvenile justice system. Acknowledging this, Boulder County supports efforts to raise the age at which a

juvenile can be assigned to the juvenile justice system, through programs that include local community decision-making, appropriate assessment of need, adequate public safety exemptions and provisions, and youth and family supportive services.

Environmental Health

Retail Food Establishment Fees: Support legislation that allows retail food license fees to be set outside of the General Assembly, and/or support fee increase legislation to reach inspection program cost recovery and, moving forward, adjust fees annually based on Consumer Price Index.

Battery Extended Producer Responsibility: With few convenient recycling options, only 3% of batteries are recovered at end-of-life. Improper battery disposal threatens public and environmental health, leads to fires at recycling centers, and sends valuable materials to the landfill. Boulder County supports legislation to apply extended producer responsibility requirements to batteries to improve the recycling rate and proper disposal of batteries.

Equity

Colorado Voting Rights Act: Support legislation that prohibits racial discrimination in voting and protects voting access for all eligible voters, including protected classes, voters with disabilities, LGBT voters, voters on tribal lands, and voters impacted by the criminal justice system. Immigration: Support legislation that ensures the protection of rights for people who have immigrated to the United States.

Governance

Local Government Fiscal Notes: Support legislation to create local government fiscal notes to accurately account for the full financial impacts on local government operations of legislation.

Health and Well-Being

Substance Use Disorders: Support legislation to provide civil liability and criminal prosecution immunity for the possession of controlled substances to providers and recipients of the controlled drug testing services associated with harm reduction programs.

Housing

Lodging Vacant Housing and Short-term Rental Taxes: Housing is an essential human right. Vacant and vacation housing, utilized primarily for investment purposes, removes housing from the local market for residential purposes, increasing the cost of housing and making it more difficult for community members to purchase first-time homes. Boulder County supports

providing local governments with permissive authority to refer tax measures to their voters to incentivize housing for primary residences and the creation of tools to incentivize the sale of residential property to Colorado first-time homebuyers.

Support Public Housing Authorities and other Nonprofit Affordable Housing Developers: Fifty-nine community-based Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) develop affordable housing across Colorado. Unlike private developers, PHA's are mission-driven and reinvest funding back into their local communities. Boulder County supports continued prioritization of affordable housing funding and tax abatement for Public Housing Authorities and nonprofit developers.

Address Barriers to the Provision of Transitional Housing Services: Transitional housing programs support self-sufficiency and rehabilitation after a person has lost housing. Recent legislation has compromised the ability of these programs to provide housing for more than one year. Boulder County supports efforts to remove barriers to providing longer-term transitional housing to Coloradans.

Human Services

Codify the Indian Child Welfare Act in Colorado Statute: The Indian Child Welfare Act ensures Native American Tribes can protect Native American children from abuse and neglect. With the sovereignty of Tribal Nations at possible risk at the national level, codifying the Indian Child Welfare Act in state statute ensures that Tribal nations can continue to oversee child welfare concerns of their members.

Public Guardianship Reform: Boulder County supports public guardianship reform that protects the rights of people under guardianship, including the provision of safeguards for children of migrants and ensuring that third parties cannot ignore guardianship authority.

Language Justice

Improved Language Access in State Government: Boulder County supports language access in all spheres of life and will support legislative and other efforts to improve language access to state government information and services.

Organizational Stewardship

County Revenue Diversification: As recent legislative sessions have shown, county revenue streams have become more vulnerable and unstable, and increasingly subject to statewide decisions that do not account for the unique circumstances and priorities of individual counties. Discussions around revenue should be driven locally, reflecting each county's specific needs and economic conditions. Boulder County supports legislation to provide counties with the authority to propose customized revenue-raising solutions to their voters, regardless of whether their economies are driven by agriculture, tourism, or industry. Some examples

include an increase to the current lodging tax cap, excise tax authority, and authority to levy sales and use taxes in just the unincorporated areas of a county.

Property Tax Work-off Program for the Elderly Reforms: Outdated and overly bureaucratic statute serves as a barrier to county governments interested in supporting its older adults through a property tax work-off program. Boulder County supports statutory reforms to the Property Tax Work-off Program for the Elderly to allow increased wages for older adult participants, ensure application of wages earned to property tax bills, and improve ease of program implementation and administration.

Public Safety

Unlawful Conduct on Public Property: Recent changes to state law have reduced the ability of county sheriff deputies to enforce violations of federal laws and regulations on federal lands, including such violations as illegal camping, unattended campfires, off-road vehicle use, and illegal dumping by making them a petty offense violation instead of a misdemeanor violation. Boulder County supports legislation to return selective violations of federal regulations to the status of a misdemeanor to address the serious environmental, public health, and safety risks associated with these unlawful behaviors.

Transportation

Transit: Support tools that expand transit service, increase mode choice, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and increase the use of transit while prioritizing equity, including the expansion of services in underserved areas. Support legislation requiring the Colorado Department of Transportation to present a statewide mode choice assessment that includes for VMT reductions and increased transit use targets. These policies are critical to addressing Colorado's continually increasing vehicle miles traveled brought on by population growth.

Transportation Emission Reductions: Support policies that encourage emission reductions from key transportation-related source sectors, including such indirect sources as shopping centers and warehouses that are traffic generators. Policies that require additional motor vehicle emission reductions in the Denver Metro/North Front Range Severe Ozone Nonattainment Area will accelerate fleet turnover in the nine-county nonattainment area, including Boulder County, which has been plagued by poor summer-time air quality for far too long.

Vulnerable Road User Registration Fees: Support legislation allowing local governments to assess vulnerable road user registration fees tied to vehicles' weight, height, and fuel efficiency to fund projects focused on vulnerable road user safety improvements.

Highway Users Tax Fund: Highway Users Tax Fund (HUTF) revenues are used by the state and local governments to support roadway maintenance and safety and other improvements. Boulder County supports policy approaches to increase the amount of revenue that flows into

the HUTF, including such options as increasing the state gasoline tax and ensuring that electric vehicles appropriately pay into the fund.

State Budget Priorities

Boulder County recognizes the importance of a state government that is fiscally responsible. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the administration and General Assembly on development of the state budget, especially regarding policies and programs that affect our organization or our constituents.

Air Quality and Climate Action

Stationary Sources Control Fund: Support the Governor's Office proposal to raise Stationary Sources Control Fund fees to increase revenue for the Air Pollution Control Division to meet its growing air quality and climate mandate.

Sustainable Funding for the Colorado Energy Office: Support the Governor's Office budget item to secure long-term funding for the Colorado Energy Office to continue its critical programming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Colorado.

Community and Juvenile Justice

Preventing Youth Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System: Support funding for risk-sharing contracts between the state of Colorado and counties that work to prevent the involvement of children and young people in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Boulder County supports expansion of risk-sharing contracts with additional communities to advance juvenile justice and child welfare reform.

Community Corrections: Community Corrections programming serves as a pathway to support individuals exiting prison or as an alternative to incarceration for felony offenders that supports better integration in the community and reduced recidivism. Boulder County supports the Governor's budget request of \$6.1 million for community corrections.

Environmental Health

Clean Water and Drinking Water: Support proposed cash fund fee increases for the Water Quality Control Division to address clean water and drinking water permitting and inspection backlogs, which will improve access to these services for low-income communities across Colorado.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Equity and Cumulative Impact Analysis (EECIA): Boulder County supported the 2024 state legislation to implement many of the recommendations developed by the General Assembly's Environmental Justice Action Task Force, including the recommendation that established the framework for the creation of the EECIAs. Boulder County supports continued funding for this important environmental justice program.

Human Services

Address Reduced Access to Child Care: In March 2024, the federal Administration of Children and Families made important reforms in the Child Care Development Fund to reduce cost burdens on families and support childcare providers. However, these federal rule changes will cost Colorado more than \$68 million to implement. Without increased funding, 20 percent fewer families will be able to access the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program. Many counties, including Boulder County, can no longer accept new applications for CCAP due to the lack of adequate CCAP funding. By the end of 2025, the state expects that there will not be sufficient funding to accept new applications anywhere in the state, though counties, by law, must still accept and fund child welfare and TANF-related CCCAP applications regardless of whether the county has state funds to provide those services.

Ensure Access to Safety Net Benefits such as Medicaid and Food Assistance: Boulder County supports the recommendations identified in the SB22-235, County Administration of Public Assistance Programs report, including filling the funding gap to assist Coloradans in accessing public benefits. Boulder County supports additional recommendations from the SB22-235 report, including aligning eligibility across programs, reducing documentation burdens, improving client communication, streamlining administrative processes, and improving the Colorado Benefits Management System and PEAK client portal technology systems. Boulder County supports the budget requests from the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance (\$38.2 million) and the Dept. of Human Services (\$4.2 million) to improve access to these essential benefits, especially during this time of increasing costs and impacts to families with lower incomes.

Child Welfare: Across the United States, more than one in seven children suffer from abuse and neglect each year. The costs to provide child welfare services have increased in Colorado over the past several years because of several factors, including higher acuity of children's needs, without adequate increases in funding. Unfortunately, Colorado has a history of underfunding services for the state's most vulnerable children. In 2019, it was estimated that Colorado was short 191 child protection workers, yet no increase in funding was provided to address this staffing need. More recently, SB21-277, Child Welfare Services Allocation Formula, required the state Department of Human Services to undertake a new workload study, which again demonstrated state under-funding of child welfare staffing. In 2024, the Joint Budget

Committee approved a modest increase in child welfare funding, to address the ongoing staffing shortfall. Boulder County requests that the Joint Budget Committee and the state legislature keep whole current funding levels to these critical child protective services, not add any new requirements to the provision of these services without including adequate implementation funding, and closely track previously passed legislation that is driving unexpected costs, such as SB24-008, Kinship Foster Care Homes. Additionally, Boulder County is grateful to the legislature for their leadership last year in passing HB24-1038, High-Acuity Crisis for Children and Youth, to ensure that children and youth are not sleeping in county offices and hospital emergency rooms for the lack of high-acuity treatment options. Boulder County asks the JBC and General Assembly to pay close attention to the implementation of this bill and support its continued funding, as too many children remain stuck in stop-gap settings in Boulder County and across the state.

Transportation

Reductions to CDOT SB21-260 Transfers: SB21-260, Sustainability of The Transportation System, mandates an annual \$100 million General Fund transfer to the State Highway Fund. Boulder County supports the Governor's budget proposal to reduce this transfer by \$39 million while making up for this reduction in later years. This reduction, while impacting the Bustang bus service, will keep the funding stream for the Multimodal Options Fund (MMOF) whole: The MMOF is a critical funding stream to support long-term investment in multimodal transportation projects as a strategy for meeting Colorado's greenhouse gas emission reductions and air quality goals. Boulder County would also support directing a larger share of the SB21-260 transfer to the MMOF.

Workforce

Workforce Center Funding: Support and protect funding for local workforce centers, and identify a sustainable funding stream for the Virtual, Career-Aligned English as a Second Language program, which was discontinued beginning July 1, 2024.