



April 26, 2022

Dear Chair Michaelson Jenet and Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Children's Hospital Colorado, we are writing today to urge your support of HB22-1380, as this bill will make important strides towards addressing food insecurity, and streamlining technology and improving eligibility system processes for vital public benefit programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Investments from HB22-1380 will have positive impacts on our children, youth and families' long-term health.

Children's Hospital Colorado is proud to partner with the community to advocate for the health and well-being of kids and families. Our work goes beyond our hospital walls and into the communities we support. In addition to our patient care, Children's Hospital Colorado supports families by providing care coordination, advocacy and facilitating access to community programs and resources. In particular, we know that food insecurity remains high for one-third of all Coloradans and according to a Hunger Free Colorado survey, 33% of Coloradans lack reliable access to nutritious food and 16% of Colorado kids are not getting adequate nutrition due to financial constraints.¹

Programs like SNAP are intended to help alleviate food insecurity by enabling families to make their money stretch further on food and purchase healthier foods. However, small food retail outlets often struggle to keep prices down while simultaneously, many small farms report that they are struggling to connect with local retailers to sell their crops, causing prices to rise and fresh foods to be harder to access for Colorado families using SNAP. House Bill 22-1380 utilizes federal American Recovery Plan Act funding to invest in programs that will help mitigate these issues.

Increasing access to healthy foods decreases the risk of diet-related diseases like diabetes, heart disease and stroke for children and families.² In addition, a study from the American Journal of Preventive Medicine showcased that participation in SNAP is associated with reduced household and child food insecurity, lower odds of poor health and growth and developmental risk among infants and toddlers, and reduced hardships because of healthcare costs for their families. Improved SNAP participation and increased SNAP benefits that match the regional cost of food may be effective preventive health strategies for promoting the health and well-being of families with young children.³

HB22-1380 also streamlines and improves technology systems with various benefit programs like LEAP, TANF, and Medicaid. All of these programs have demonstrated, positive benefits to children and their families, especially when removing barriers to enrollment and eligibility systems. A 2019 report on reducing child poverty concluded that income support for families experiencing poverty can improve children's health and academic achievement, which in turn can lead to better health and higher earnings in adulthood.⁴ Economic security programs can blunt the negative effects of poverty and bring low-income children closer to equal opportunity. Research also indicates that economic security programs not only open doors of opportunity for participating low-income children but also lift their future health, productivity, and ability to contribute to their communities and the economy.⁵

We urge you to support HB22-1380 and thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill. If passed, we believe this bill will have beneficial impact for Colorado's children and their families.

Sincerely,

Zach Zaslow, Director of Government Affairs
Children's Hospital Colorado
zach.zaslow@childrenscolorado.org

¹ [Hunger Facts - Hunger Free Colorado](#)

² [Poor Nutrition | CDC](#)

³ [SNAP, Young Children's Health, and Family Food Security and Healthcare Access - ScienceDirect](#)

⁴ [Consequences of Child Poverty - A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁵ [PathwaysWinter11_Duncan.pdf \(stanford.edu\)](#)

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services
04/26/2022 01:30 PM
HB22-1380 Critical Services For Low-income Households
Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Kathryn Wall For Zuma Natural Foods</p>	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with you. My name is Kathryn Wall, I am the owner of Zuma Natural Foods in Mancos, Colorado I support House Bill 1380. I have worked in the grocery industry for almost 20 years and been a farmer for 16 of those years, I have worked with federal, state and local government ag programs.</p> <p>Mancos is a town of about 1,700 people in Montezuma County in Southwest Colorado. Durango, a 30 minute drive and Cortez a 20 minute drive are the two closest communities with large grocery stores. I believe as a grocer I have an important role and responsibility to ensure that everyone in my community has food security.</p> <p>COVID brought into stark relief the many weak points of our food system. Creativity, flexibility, and hard work on the part of community organizers, participants, and many small grocers like myself, were needed to navigate really challenging circumstances in the supply chain to get food to those in the greatest need.</p> <p>At the height of the pandemic my little natural foods store was sourcing, organizing, and ordering food for six non-profits/grass-roots groups that were providing food in communities as far as 100 miles away from Mancos. I spent researched mobile refrigeration units, worked with local farmers to access mobile refrigeration, and shared their expertise on low cost solutions to get food safely to communities. When personal vehicles of community organizers broke down, I helped to coordinate people and vehicles to retrieve and deliver supplies.</p> <p>The reason I speak of my experience is not to promote myself. I believe that many other retailers in Colorado did very similar work. We now know what is needed in our communities. I also know other small food retailers that would be more engaged if there were financial support available which I think this program will be able to address.</p> <p>Currently my POS system requires that we run EBT externally. If I were able to access grant dollars to make upgrades to my POS system that would have a direct impact on the members of my community who utilize the EBT program making it more accessible and consistently available.</p> <p>Please know that small food retailers are not working with a lot of capital, and this is not a profession that makes anyone rich. Small rural grocers want to serve our communities. I hope that House Bill 1380 might make it a little easier to keep serving our communities and serve them better than we currently do. Thank you.</p>

