



Dear Honorable Members of House Public and Behavioral Health and Human Services Committee,

I am writing to you today to express The Kempe Foundation's support for HB21-1258: Rapid Mental Health Response for Colorado Youth. We applaud the sponsors, Representative Michaelson Jenet and Representative Kevin Van Winkle, for putting forward a measure to promptly identify the mental health needs of our youth given the trauma they have experienced over the past year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Exposure to trauma can lead to toxic stress, which inhibits brain development and impacts children's learning, behavior, or both. A large body of research has demonstrated negative effects of trauma on students' cognitive, academic, behavioral, and social-emotional functioning. Children have suffered disproportionately from the lockdowns, closed schools and general isolation over the past year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought Colorado to an inflection point in the care and protection of our children and families. It has hit our most at-risk communities the hardest and the trauma children are experiencing as a result is certain to have major, long-term adverse impacts for them individually and for our communities and state unless we act promptly to address these concerns.

HB 1258 will create an important program that can screen our most vulnerable youth for mental health concerns and ensure they receive the services they need. We urge the committee to support HB21-1258: Rapid Mental Health Response for Colorado Youth.

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**COLORADO
CROSS-DISABILITY
COALITION**

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CCDC supports HB21-1258 Rapid Mental Health Response for Colorado Youth

The Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition advocates for social justice for people with all types of disabilities, including behavioral health disabilities. We urge you to pass this bill.



Written testimony in support of HB21-1258 (Rapid Mental Health Response for Colorado Youth) to the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee by Sarah Barnes, Manager of Special Policy Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign

- Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Sarah Barnes and I am the Manager of Special Policy Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1258, and thank you Representatives Michaelson-Jenet and Van Winkle for your leadership on this bill.
- **The Colorado Children's Campaign supports HB 1258** because it will help broaden access to mental health services for Colorado youth.
- 52 percent of Colorado district or school leaders reported being concerned about student emotional support last fall —making it the most common concern cited by education leaders across the state.
- Before the pandemic spread across the country and Colorado, many of our students were already facing mental and behavioral health crises. In 2019, more than one third of high school students reported that they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks (a hallmark symptom of clinical depression) according to results from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey.
- The disruptions and social isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to only exacerbate mental and behavioral health issues for youth in Colorado.
- Understanding and meeting the mental and behavioral health needs of all Colorado youth is critical, especially as they deal with the lasting impacts of the pandemic. We will need a myriad of strategies to support these needs for Colorado youth as they start back to school in the fall.
- HB 1258 will help with one part of the solution by providing youth with access to mental health screenings and connections to mental health providers.
- We are excited to hear input from youth in Colorado on the design and implementation of this strategy.
- We urge your support of HB 1258 as one part of the solution to supporting the needs of Colorado youth as they recover from the effects of the pandemic on their mental and behavior health. Thank you.

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services						
Testimony - HB21-1258 Rapid Mental Health Response For Colorado Youth						
Title	First Name	Last Name	Position	Representing	Testifying	Registered
Mr.	Steve	Tool	For	Self	In Person	4/20/2021 13:21
Mr.	Vincent	Atchity	For	Mental Health Colorado	In Person	4/20/2021 13:40
	Elsa	Cavender	For	Self	In Person	4/20/2021 13:42
	Robert	Worthwein	For	Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health	In Person	4/20/2021 13:51
	Frank	Cornelia	For	Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council	In Person	4/20/2021 14:10
	Debbie	Stafford	For	Aurora Mental Health Center	In Person	4/20/2021 14:51
	Aku	Unvu	For	Self	In Person	4/20/2021 12:38
Ms	Tessa	Boettcher	For	Self	In Person	4/20/2021 12:38
Ms.	Leanne	Rupp	For	National Association of Social Workers - Colorado Chapter	In Person	4/20/2021 12:59
	Steve	Haden	For	Envision: You	Remotely	4/16/2021 7:37
Ms.	Katia	Marquecho	For	Office of Behavioral Health	Remotely	4/19/2021 13:46
	Deb	Haviland	Against	Community Reach Center	Remotely	4/19/2021 14:23
	Samantha	Nuechterlein	For	Education Reform Now and Democrats for Education Reform	Remotely	4/19/2021 16:12
MS	MARYANN	WISEHART	Against	Self	Remotely	4/19/2021 16:13
Ms.	Jennifer	Iverson	For	DCSD Parents of Students with Disabilities	Remotely	4/19/2021 19:21
	Steven	Haden	For	Envision: You	Remotely	4/19/2021 8:19
Director of Government Affairs	Angelina	Sierra-Sandoval	For	Colorado League of Charter Schools	Remotely	4/19/2021 10:25
Ms.	Abigail	McLaughlin	For	Self	Remotely	4/20/2021 11:49
Mr.	LEvon	Hupfer	For	17th District Attorney's Office, the office of Brian S. Mason	Remotely	4/20/2021 12:45
Ms.	Deb	Mahan	For	Gazette Charities and Anschutz Foundation	Remotely	4/20/2021 12:49
	Camille	Wolfe	For	Colorado School Social Work Association	Remotely	4/20/2021 12:59
	Annie	Bukay	For	Jefferson Center Policy Action Network	Submitted text	4/20/2021 8:24
	Ethan	Reed	For			
Mr.	Sarah	Barnes	For	Colorado Children's Campaign	Submitted text	4/20/2021 10:19
Ms.			For		Unloaded file	4/20/2021 13:36

Good Afternoon, x000D_x000D_

My name is Annie Bukay, and I am representing Jefferson Center's Policy Action Network, I am a social worker. I currently work as a coordinator of the school-based mental health program, and prior to that, I was a therapist. I have worked with kids and families for 15 years. x000D_x000D_

Our youths are struggling in ways that we are only beginning to understand and treat. We are managing not only the individual and family impacts of a global pandemic, but also the systemic toll of ongoing exposure to illness, death, divisiveness, fear, and losses resulting from COVID-19. While we are more plugged in than ever before, our kids and teenagers are reporting isolation, anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts at a higher rate than I have experienced in my career. COVID-19 has brought Zoom into almost every household, and yet accessing appropriate mental health services remains a barrier for families who have already been hardest hit by COVID-19. Many youths are falling their classes, disengaged from their peer group, or have simply disappeared from the school system; these children are not accessing mental health services because they're too busy focusing on survival. Those most impacted include families who qualify for CHP+ but cannot afford the copay for therapy, children who are ineligible for Medicaid due to immigration status, and families with high-deductible insurance plans that make therapy cost-prohibitive. x000D_x000D_

By passing a bill that permits youths to have 3 free therapy sessions, you are helping our highest-risk children have the opportunity to be assessed for risk. These youths have the right to be connected to a trained professional who can assess for safety and provide them with education about ways to move forward in a healthier way. Additionally, it is my opinion that 3 sessions is a great start, but will not address the depth of the current mental health needs our youths have. A truly equitable response includes the ability for each person to receive the level of care they need to heal from trauma, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. I ask you to support HB21-1258, as it is movement in a positive direction, and I also ask that you consider envisioning a possibility for providing more in-depth options for children who have been most severely impacted by COVID-19. Equitable mental health access is a necessity for all youths, regardless of their ability to pay for it. x000D_x000D_

Thank you, x000D_x000D_

My name is Ethan Reed, and I am a senior at Legend high school in Parker, Colorado. I am writing in strong support of this bill as I believe it is much needed for young people across the state of Colorado. Already through the past years, we have witnessed a surge in mental health issues that have been arising from young people in Colorado, personally including I have unfortunately lost two friends to suicide in the past few years, and my community was struck by a school shooting at the STEM school in Highlands Ranch. x000D_x000D_

Legislators, I strongly urge you to support this bill, as I already know many Coloradans who have lost jobs and money due to this pandemic, and the isolation has been detrimental to my peers and myself. I'm proud to stand with the prime sponsors such as Rep. Mitchellson-Jenet in pushing this bill to become a reality for Colorado youth across. Thank you, and have a nice day!

Testimony Report HB21-1258

John	Faught	For	The Kempe Foundation	Uploaded file	4/20/2021 9:49
Valerie	Schlecht	For	Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition	Uploaded file	4/20/2021 11:45