

MAY 21, 2026

**COLORADO'S 2026
LEGISLATIVE SESSION:**

Navigating a Polycrisis



Joe Hanel

Suman Mathur

**Gerardo
Silva-Padrón**



COLORADO **HEALTH** INSTITUTE

CHI strengthens communities and systems with trusted analysis and collaborative solutions to improve health.



We answer critical questions.



We make sense of complex issues.

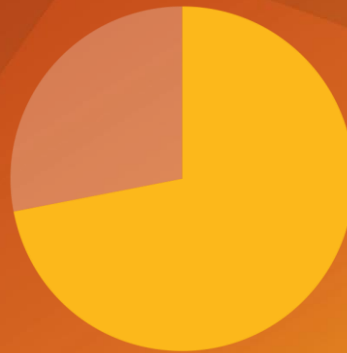


We support others to reach actionable solutions.

The 2026 Colorado Legislative Session

\$47 Billion
Budget for 2026-27

626 bills introduced
449 passed



72%
pass rate

70 bills

heard in House
HHS Committee

58 bills

heard in Senate
HHS Committee



In 2025: 657 bills introduced • 585 passed • 89% pass rate

Today's Speakers



**Joe
Hanel**

*Communications
Director*



**Suman
Mathur**

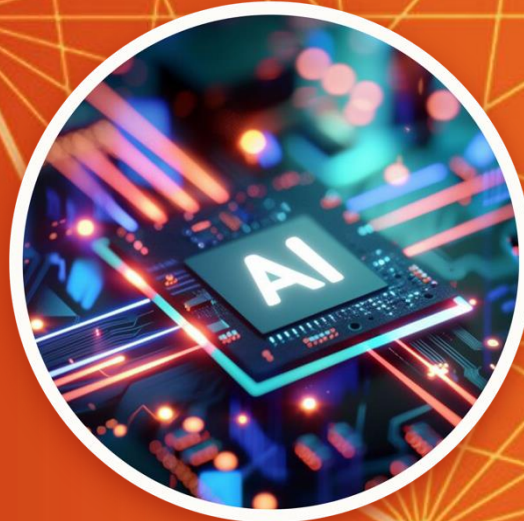
Director



**Gerardo
Silva-Padrón**

Associate

What's a Polycrisis?



The Colorado Polycrisis

Issues or challenges that:

- Affect Coloradans' health and well-being
- Interconnected, and each element amplifies the others



**State Budget
on the Brink**



**Responding to
Federal Policy
Changes**



**AI and
Internet
Culture**

How Did the Legislature Respond?



Takeaways

The state's budget will fall into deficit by 2030.

Federal actions required the legislature to react.

AI and internet culture are introducing new dilemmas for policymakers.



A Budget on the Brink



The Most Important Document of the Session



Joint Budget Committee Staff
Nonpartisan Budget Analysis for Colorado's Legislature

Memorandum

To: Joint Budget Committee Members
From: Craig Harper, JBC Staff
Date: February 20, 2026
Subject: Budget Stress Test as of February 2026

As was the case in the 2025 stress test, **the State budget cannot sustain its current trajectory.** The State continues to spend more General Fund than it is taking in each year, relying on one-time revenues to prop up the expenditures. Assuming adoption of the Governor's request for FY 2026-27 and then projecting forward with the assumptions discussed in the following section, the 2026 stress test shows the General Fund reserve gone by FY 2029-30 *even without a recession*. Under the moderate recession scenario, the reserve is essentially gone by the end of FY 2026-27. Sustaining a viable reserve will require structural change to revenues and/or obligations.

structural deficit, with all persist for FY 2026-27, agencies (particularly for tee has already approved ss, with many proposals

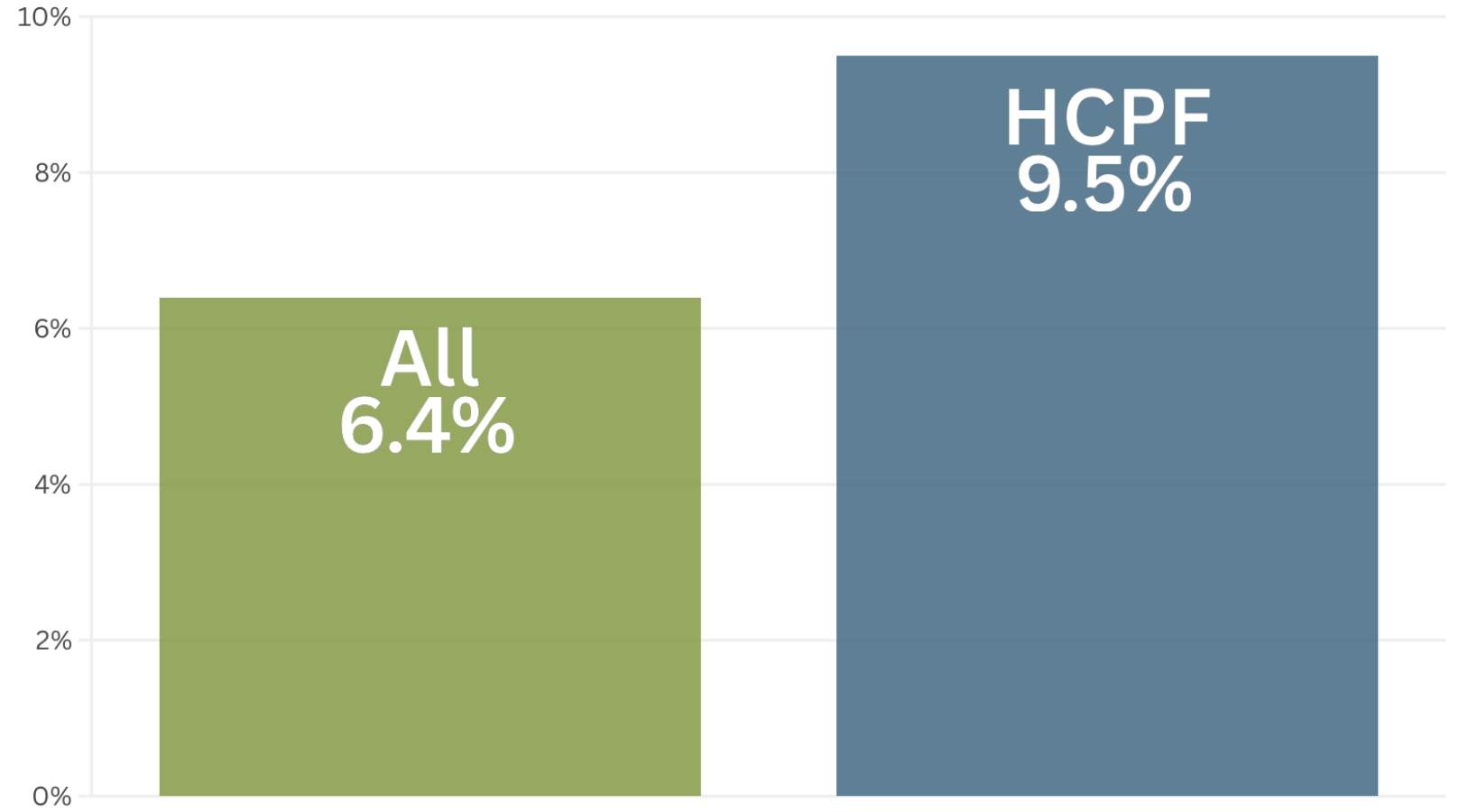
However, even with those reductions, the Governor's balancing plan for FY 2026-27 uses more than \$1 billion in one-time funding over two years (FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27) to balance, including:

- \$400.0 million from the conversion of Pinnacol in FY 2026-27 (Statewide request R1).
- \$334.2 million in spending from the General Fund reserve by reducing the reserve requirement from 15.0 to

The Problem in One Image

Average Annual Percentage Growth in General Fund

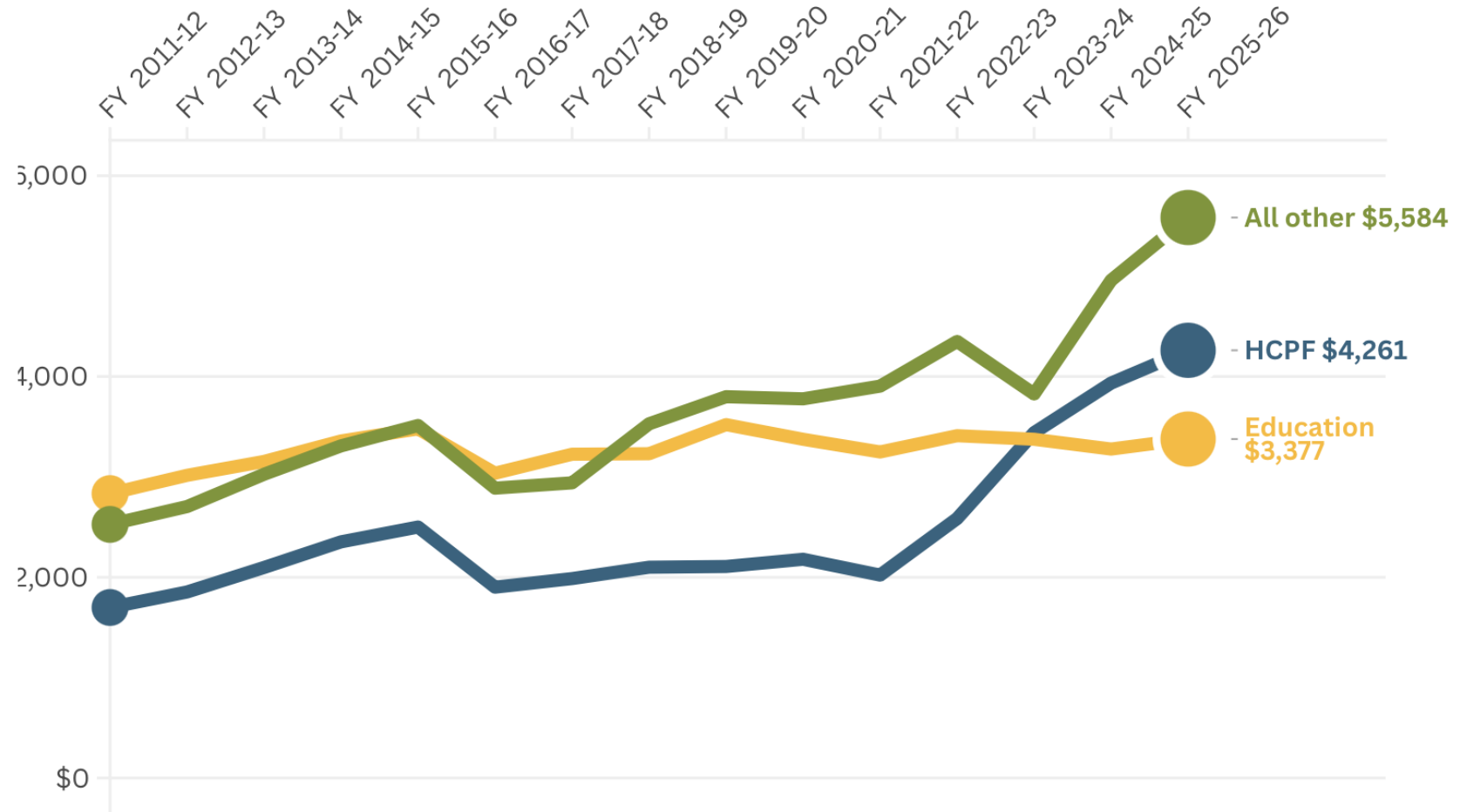
Since 2011-12



K-12 Spending Stagnates While Medicaid Spending Jumps

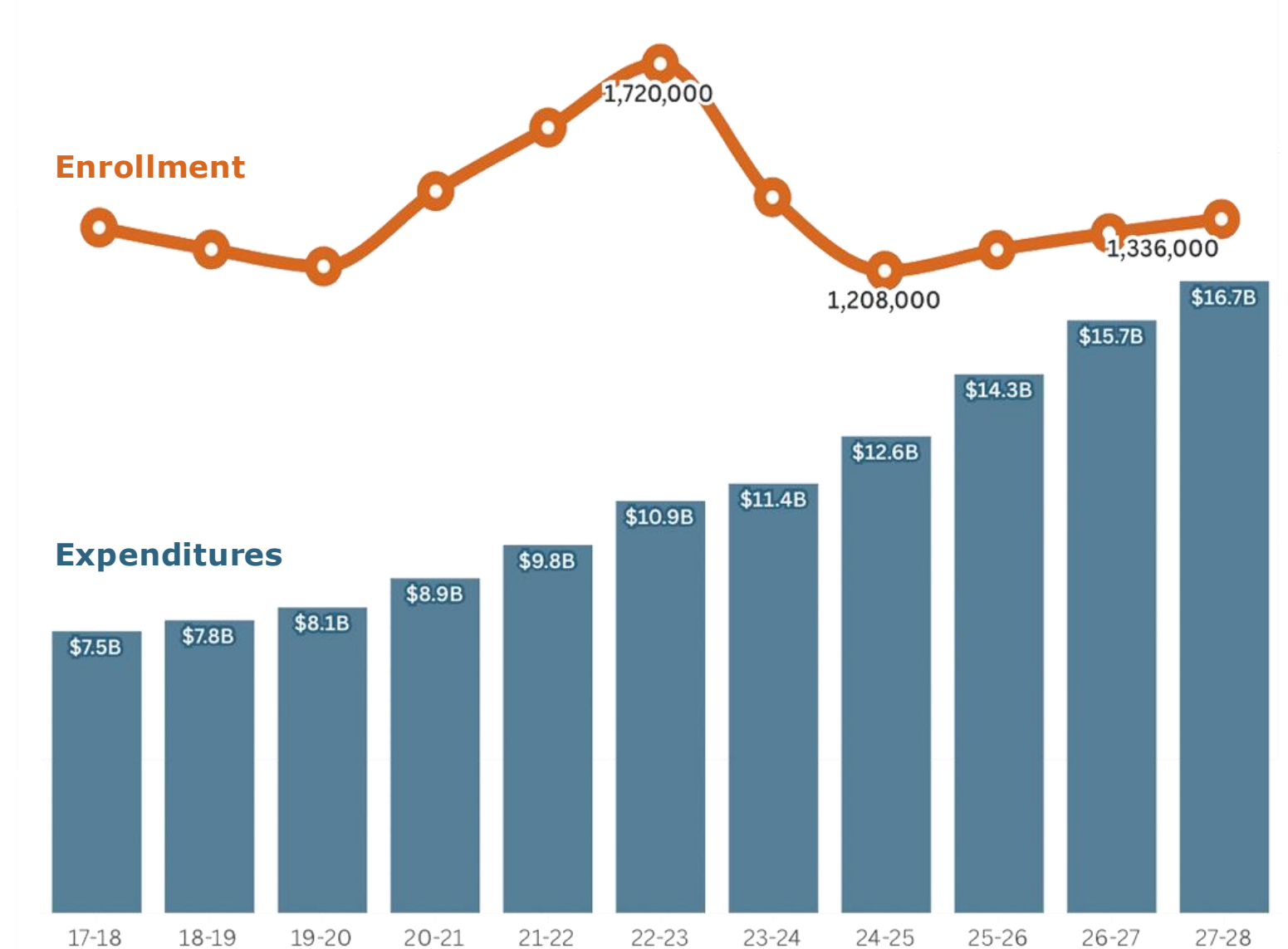
General Fund

millions of dollars



Medicaid Membership Falls, but Costs Rise

Medical Services Premiums Enrollment and Expenditures: November 2025 forecast



Source:
JBC staff briefing document
Dec. 10, 2025

https://content.leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/fy2026-27_hcpbrf1.pdf

Cuts and Consequences

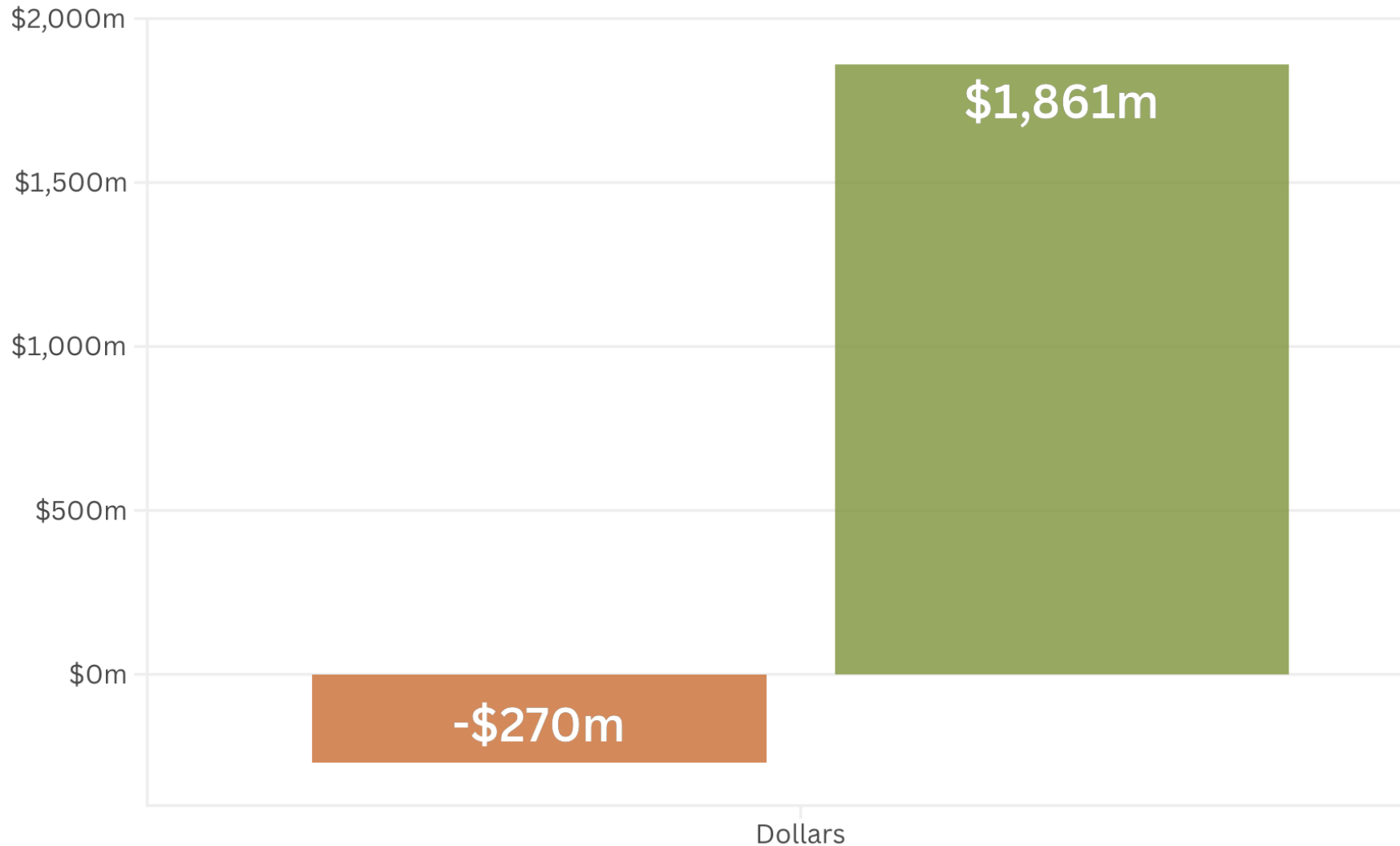
- HCPF director resigns under pressure
- Medicaid cuts:
 - ▶ Provider rates cut by 2% (with exemptions)
 - ▶ Cap on paid caregiver hours
 - ▶ Adult annual dental cap
 - ▶ Benefit limits for Cover All Coloradans (HB 1411)



Medicaid Expense Growth Dwarfs Cuts

HCPF Budget Changes FY25-26 to FY26-27

Cuts Increase



Medicaid Under the Microscope

- Bipartisan support for SB 187 to establish a commission to explore Medicaid in Colorado.
- Charged with identifying policy changes to implement an efficient, effective, and sustainable program.
- Report expected December 2026.



Federal Policy Challenges



Federal Policy Changes

- Federal policies increase cost burden on Colorado while slashing funding.
- Internet culture plays a large role in these issues.



Federal Policy Changes



- Implications on the state tax code
- Medicaid eligibility restrictions
- SNAP eligibility restrictions and funding cuts
- Public benefits administrative cost sharing
- Expiration of enhanced insurance subsidies
- Colorado Healthcare Affordability and Sustainability Enterprise (CHASE) fee reductions

Colorado Legislature's Response:

August Special Session to address state tax code

HB 1429 County Administration Public Assistance Programs

SB 178 Health Insurance Affordability Measures

Federal **H.R. 1** compliance funding in state budget



Aggressive Immigration Enforcement

Colorado Legislature's Response:

HB 1275

Law Enforcement
Identification and
Immigration Training
Requirements

did not pass

HB 1276

Protect Safety of
Individuals Who Are
Immigrants

SB 005

Rights Violation
in Immigration
Enforcement Remedy

Challenges From Make America Healthy Again

- Reduced the number of recommended vaccines
- Cuts to federal agency budgets and programs
- Social media campaigns



Colorado
Legislature's
Response:

SB 032
Protecting
Immunization
Access

Instagram

CDC Advisers Align Childhood Vaccination Schedule With Other High-Income Nations, Media Melts Down Anyway
 Dec 5, 2025 | Emily Kopp



U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION
 ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON IMMUNIZATION PRACTICES (ACIP)

MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON IMMUNIZATION PRACTICES
 December 4, 2025
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 Atlanta

Members:
 Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
 Robert M. Calvert
 Robert M. Calvert
 Robert M. Calvert

810 92 15 81


hhs.gov Ignore the media's hysteria.

On Friday, @cdcgov's Advisory... more

After an exhaustive review of the evidence, we are aligning the U.S. childhood vaccine schedule with international consensus while strengthening transparency and informed consent.

This decision protects children, respects families, and rebuilds trust in public health.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
 HHS Press Release



The WHITE HOUSE

12.4K 965 188 534

SERVICES

BREAKING: The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has voted in favor of removing the universal hepatitis B vaccine recommendation for infants under 2 months old.



375

121

ENDING BIG PHARMA DECEPTION

DRUG ADS HARM PATIENTS

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) drug advertising is overmedicalization, which is when patients need medications get them anyway.

- 42% of Americans 65 or more medication
- The odds of experiencing an adverse reaction to 7-10% with each add
- Adverse drug events leading cause of death in United States, resulting in 250,000 deaths ann

THANK YOU PRESIDENT TRUMP AND SENATOR KENNEDY FOR ENDING DECEPTIVE DRUG ADVERTISING

121 15 1 5


THE MAINSTREAM MADE US SICK. CHOOSE THE HEALTHIER PATH.



310 93 10 140

hhs.gov Beating cancer once shouldn't mean

HHS Has a Potential Solution for Cancers That Keep Coming Back: Vaccines
 March 17, 2025 | Brian Gornley

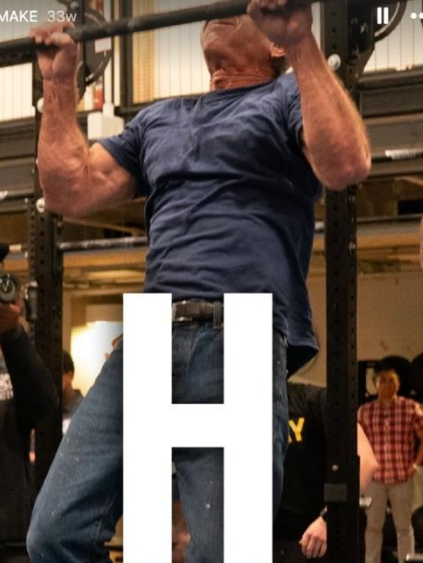


MAKE AMERICA HEALTHY AGAIN

310 93 10 140

hhs.gov Beating cancer once shouldn't mean

MAKE 33w



H

9,293 2,093 93

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL


Robert F. Kennedy Jr.: We're Public Trust in the C



The WHITE HOUSE

9,293 2,093 93

hhs.gov



PRESS RELEASE

CDC Acts on Presidential Memorandum to Update Childhood Immunization Schedule

HHS MAKE AMERICA HEALTHY AGAIN

322 36 3 37

hhs.gov Deputy Secretary @hhs_jim O'N in his role as Acting Director of @cdcgov today signed a decision memo... more

January 5

AI and Internet Culture



AI and The Internet

- In 2024, Colorado passed first-in-the nation AI bill.
- 2025 federal executive order incentivized growth of AI companies and called out Colorado for interfering.
- Downstream impacts of AI not fully understood.



AI: Challenges for Health

Growing concern about how AI is used in health and health care settings

- Patient privacy concerns
- Ethical decision-making

**Colorado
Legislature's
Response:**

HB 1139
Use of Artificial
Intelligence in
Health Care

SB 189
Automated
Decision-Making
Technology

HB 1195
AI Restrictions
in Therapy and
Psychotherapy

AI: Challenges from Data Centers

- Opportunities for economic development
- Concerns over climate and community impacts

Colorado Legislature's Response:

SB 102

Large-Load Data Centers
did not pass

HB 1030

Data Center and Utility Modernization
did not pass

Online Culture: Challenges to Youth Safety

- Clear connection between youth digital media use and youth mental health
- Concern about youth privacy and safety in online spaces

Colorado Legislature's Response:

HB 1263

Conversational AI

SB 051

Age Attestation on
Computing Devices

HB 1148

Youth Social Media
Protections

did not pass

Online Culture: Challenges from Mobile Sports Betting

Growing recognition
of sports betting as a
public health issue
following changes to
federal law in 2018



In 2025, **90%** of bets were placed on phones

Colorado
Legislature's
Response:

SB 131

Sports Betting
Protections

SB 163

Regulation
of Gaming and
Sports Betting

How Did the Legislature Respond?



State Budget Deficit



Responding to Federal Policy Changes



AI and Internet Culture

Other Key Health Bills:

HB 1272 Worker's Rights

SB 149 Competency Reform

HB 1044 Black Maternal Health Equity

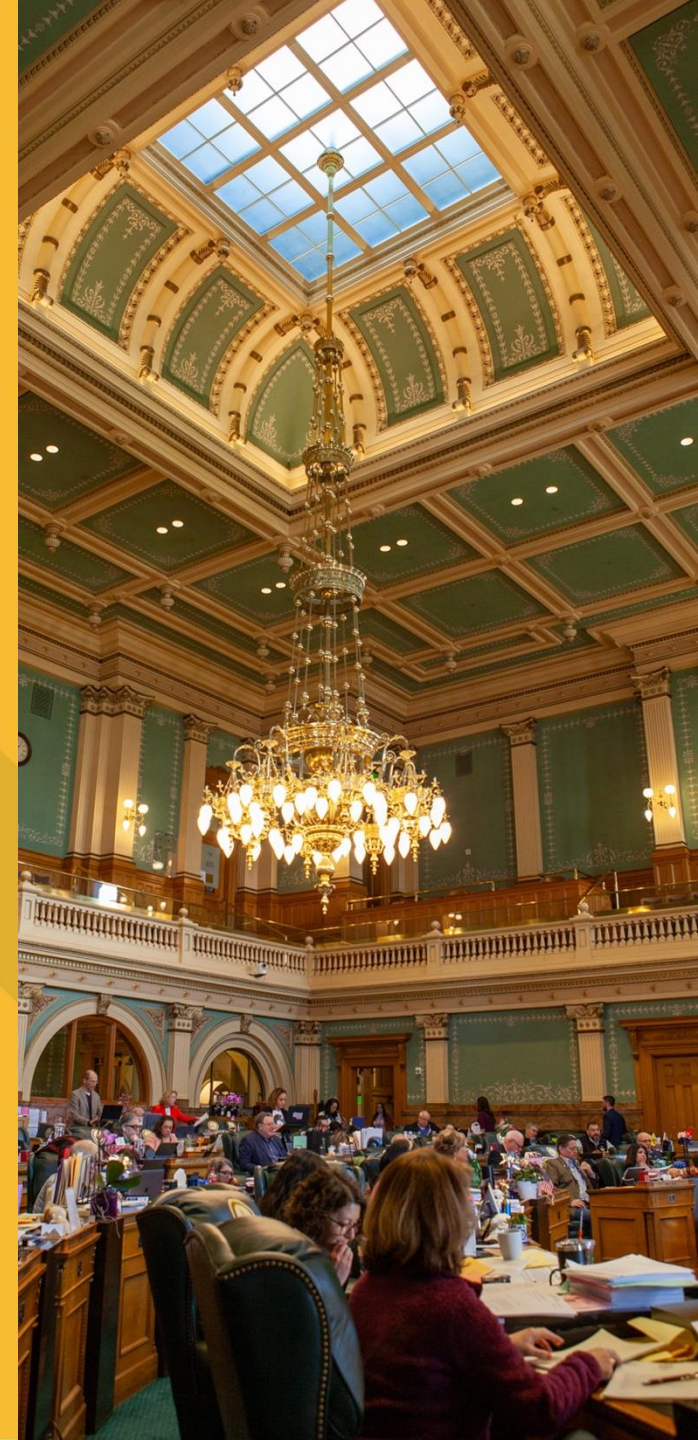
HB 1425 Applied Behavior Analysis Therapy

SB 006 Non-Opioid Pain Management

HB 1002 Behavioral Health Workforce

HB 1063 Behavioral Health Transportation

HB 1116 Behavioral Health Discharges



Beyond the Legislature, How Are Coloradans Tackling These Issues?

Voters and Advocates:

- ▶ State ballot initiatives that address the deficit

The Governor's Race:

- ▶ Primary elections June 30, 2026
- ▶ Election Day November 3, 2026
- ▶ How will the next governor address the polycrisis?

A photograph of the Colorado state flag, featuring a blue field with a white and red chevron, a yellow circle, and a blue field with a white and red chevron. The flag is displayed in a grand, ornate building with classical architectural details like columns and arches.

**How
else are
Coloradans
responding
to these
issues?**

Discussion