



Final Report to the General Assembly

Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee
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Legislative Council Staff

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This report is also available online at:

[https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/2025A/interim/ColoradoYouthAdvisory
CouncilCommittee](https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/2025A/interim/ColoradoYouthAdvisoryCouncilCommittee)

Committee Charge

The Representative Hugh McKean Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee was established in 2019 to review the work of the Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC), which was created in 2008, and recommend legislation affecting Colorado youth. In 2025, the review committee's bill drafting authority was repealed by [Senate Bill 25-199](#). COYAC and the review committee are both scheduled to repeal on September 1, 2028, after a sunset review.

Pursuant to Section 2-2-1302, C.R.S., COYAC is charged with examining, evaluating, and discussing the issues, interests, and needs affecting Colorado youth. The issues may include, but need not be limited to:

- education and skill development;
- employment and economic opportunities and educational opportunities, including increased accessibility to opportunities for youth in rural communities;
- access to state and local government services;
- the environment;
- behavioral and physical health, including suicide prevention;
- safe environments for youth, including preventing bullying;
- substance abuse;
- poverty; and
- increased youth participation in state and local government.

Each interim, COYAC must provide a summary of its work during the prior year to the review committee. COYAC must also provide recommendations concerning key issues for youth, including any legislative proposals COYAC would like the review committee to consider. The review committee can then provide feedback on the legislative proposals, but it does not currently have bill drafting authority.

Committee Activities

The committee held one meeting during the 2025 interim. The student members of the committee presented the COYAC policy recommendations to address a wide range of subjects, including:

- access to test preparation materials;
- funding for civic education;
- pollution;
- public health hazards;
- rural healthcare
- high school transition;
- tobacco transparency and intervention services; and
- teacher retention.

The following sections discuss the committee's topics discussed during the 2025 interim.

Access to Test Preparation Materials

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face in accessing sufficient preparation materials for SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement (AP) tests. The students explained how these tests play a large role in receiving scholarships and funding opportunities for colleges, and how expenses related to these tests limit the ability for some students to consistently take these tests. They also highlighted how students in areas with poor internet connection may have even less access to free online testing resources. The students recommended that Colorado create a grant program for rural and disadvantaged school districts to fund activities for test preparation, such as purchasing test preparation materials and hosting free tutoring sessions.

Funding for Civic Education

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face due to consistent funding for civic education. The students presented the merits of civic education on understanding different levels of government, and explained how the Colorado Department of Education's civics requirements were not being consistently taught across the state due to individual school district finances. The students recommended that Colorado create a trust fund to receive capital from private organizations to equitably fund civic education programs.

Pollution

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face due to pollution. The students spoke on the large amounts of pollution in the state due to things such as plastic waste, water contamination, air quality, and wildfire toxins. They also gave examples of how pollutants negatively affect daily life, and how current Colorado policies, such as those prohibiting certain single use plastic products, are not enforced equally across the state. The students recommended that Colorado expand current efforts to manage plastic products, such as [House Bill 21-1162](#). In addition, they recommended establishing a fund, paid into by large greenhouse gas emitting entities, for energy, air quality, and pollution improvement efforts. They also suggested consolidating fines for violations of Colorado anti-pollution policies at the state level, making those fines proportional to the violating organization's size, increasing grants to businesses to comply with the law, and creating volunteer positions to help with policy reporting and enforcement.

Public Health Hazards

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face with public health hazards. The students explained how Colorado youth are not adequately informed of public health concerns and environmental hazards. They further explained how individuals with disabilities are more susceptible to the effects of environmental

hazards and public health emergencies, limiting their access to necessary medical care and exacerbating existing health conditions. The students recommended that Colorado implement a two-year pilot program of an Emergency Preparedness Task Force to inform youth about mitigation strategies for environmental hazards, and that the state create a youth publication program to mobilize youth to enact research-driven change on pressing public health issues affecting at-risk Colorado populations.

Rural Healthcare

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face with rural healthcare. The students highlighted how transparency around medication and healthcare options is insufficient, hindering health outcomes and access to life-saving services. In addition, they spoke about the significant barriers to healthcare access youth in rural areas face due to a shortage of healthcare professionals in schools and limited local health infrastructure. The students recommended that Colorado establish a two-year pilot program for a school-based digital health extension to expand healthcare access for rural youth through telehealth services, partnerships, and emergency communication systems while ensuring insurance compatibility and minimizing costs. They also recommended that Colorado school-based health centers elect youth officers to engage in program management, youth input, and reducing barriers.

High School Transition

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face with transitioning out of high school. The students spoke on how young adults leave high school without necessary skills for living independently, such as renting an apartment, getting insurance, or preparing legal documents. They also discussed how students with intellectual disabilities face additional resource gaps for transitioning into postsecondary institutions. The students also expressed regret that Colorado does not have a statewide platform for an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP), and that current tools are scattered across the internet, preventing effective usage. The students recommended that Colorado create a statewide ICAP platform, expand the existing Inclusive Higher Education Pilot Program for students with intellectual disabilities to include vocational schools, and enhance life skills education in high school.

Tobacco Transparency and Intervention Services

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face with tobacco products. The students presented on the rise of tobacco use by school age children, despite available state resources. They also spoke on the harmful effects of tobacco, and how current data is lacking for tobacco and nicotine usage. The students recommended that Colorado include information on resources for quitting tobacco on the back of public-school identification cards. They also recommended that Colorado add questions to

the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey on oral nicotine during data collection, and create specifications on products labeled with synthetic and zero percent nicotine.

Teacher Retention

The review committee heard presentations from the COYAC student representatives about the challenges youth face with teacher shortages. The students showcased how Colorado is experiencing a deepening teacher shortage, driven by challenges in retaining experienced educators. They highlighted burdensome professional development requirements that add excessive hours to educators' workloads without significantly enhancing their professional growth as a key challenge to educators. The students recommended that Colorado allow school districts to suspend yearly evaluations of a teacher for three years after the teacher achieves "Highly Distinguished" status on an evaluation, and encourage that, in this case, yearly evaluations be replaced by peer mentoring or some other form of constructive professional skills enrichment. In addition, they recommended that Colorado implement a cap on the total hours of professional development required to obtain and renew a teaching license.

Resource Materials

Meeting summaries are prepared for each meeting of the committee and contain all handouts provided to the committee. The summaries of meetings and attachments are available at the Division of Archives, 1313 Sherman Street, Denver (303-866-2055). The listing below contains the dates of committee meetings and the topics discussed at those meetings. Meeting summaries are also available on our website at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/committees>

Meetings and Topics Discussed

July 15, 2025

- Discussion of COYAC Topic Areas and Student Recommendations