



Farley's Features: January 23

Bridging research and policy



Welcome to Farley's Features, the Farley Health Policy Center's monthly newsletter, focusing on key health policy issues that span primary care, behavioral health, and public health practice. Our interprofessional team invites your perspectives as we pursue health policy research, translation, implementation, and education.

Message from the Farley Center

Dear Alison,

Happy New Year from the Farley Health Policy Center! We hope you and your loved ones had a wonderful holiday season. As we begin a new year, we're tracking policy developments on a state and national level, especially as Colorado begins its 2026 General Session. Last week, we gave a preview of what we expect to see from the legislature this year to the Department of Family Medicine. The state currently faces a \$850 million budget deficit, making for a difficult year for lawmakers.

We expect to see the state budget dominate the conversation, as well as cuts to government programs and services, particularly in Medicaid. However, we do also hope to see additional state action on housing affordability, health care costs, and other social drivers.

We're excited to keep the campus community up to date on legislative developments via our monthly legislative updates, starting January 26. Details and registration are below. Additionally, we continue to engage directly with our state policymakers to deepen their understanding of Colorado's health care landscape. We appreciated the opportunity to discuss health policy topics with legislators and staff at our Designing Health Policy event in December, including rural health, prescription drugs, and the impacts of H.R. 1 on Colorado.

As we move into 2026, we look forward to continuing our work alongside researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and other groups to strengthen health and well-being for all Coloradans. We're grateful for your continued support and look forward to a productive year ahead!

All the best,

Hannah Crook, PhD

Medicaid Policy Director, Farley Health Policy Center

Upcoming Events

Farley's Legislative Updates

The Farley Health Policy Center will be offering [monthly updates](#) on the Colorado legislative session, beginning on Monday, January 26. The meetings will be noon-1 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month, January through April, and the third Monday in May. [Register via Zoom to attend](#). Add the meetings to your calendar using the options included in your confirmation e-mail from Zoom. Questions? E-mail FarleyHealthPolicyCenter@cuanschutz.edu.

CPHA Health Advocacy & Policy Summit

The Colorado Public Health Association (CPHA) will host its annual Health Advocacy & Policy Summit on Saturday, February 7, 2026, in Denver. This event is designed to equip public health students, early career professionals, and seasoned experts with practical advocacy skills. The summit emphasizes local and state-level engagement, featuring speakers who will share how grassroots efforts can spark broader movements. Attendees will gain tools to identify policy opportunities, connect with Colorado's decision-makers, and amplify their voices across different levels of government. [Learn more and register](#).

Free HCPF Webinars

Annual Hospital Report: February 11, from 7:30-10:00 a.m. This event will provide important updates on Colorado's health care landscape, including key findings from three legislatively-required annual hospital reports released in January, an update on the Rural Health Transformation Program, and a discussion of hospital impacts resulting from H.R.1 and other evolving federal policies. The webinar will feature a robust panel discussion with hospital CEOs, who will share their perspectives on these challenges and explore ways to work together to navigate the difficult terrain ahead. [Register online](#).

H.R. 1 Implementation: February 24, from 9 to 11 a.m. This event will share Medicaid related updates on the most recent CMS guidance, the implementation timeline of H.R. 1 for key changes such as semi-annual renewals and community engagement/work requirements, and opportunities for stakeholders to engage with us in the process. The webinar will also address the top concerns we heard from more than 700 respondents to our H.R.1 survey, including services covered by Medicaid, state budget challenges and Medicaid sustainability work, provider fees, and payments and tax provisions. [Register online](#).

What We're Reading

State Health Policy

[14 things that will make headlines in Colorado in 2026](#) from the Colorado Sun explores the major legislative priorities and political dynamics expected to shape Colorado's health and social policy landscape in 2026.

[First-year rural health fund awards range from less than \\$100 per rural resident in ten states to more than \\$500 in eight](#) from KFF highlights how new federal funding for rural health varies dramatically by state, raising questions about equity and sustainability.

["O.M.G.": Why Colorado voters could be asked a fourth time to fund school meals](#) from the Colorado Sun details how Proposition MM, which voters approved in November 2025, may require another ballot vote due to limitations from TABOR (Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights).

Public Health and Vaccines

[What the overhaul of U.S. vaccine guidance means for public health](#) from PBS News Hour features commentary from Colorado pediatrician Sean O'Leary.

[What do the new federal recommendations on childhood vaccines mean for Colorado?](#) from CPR details recent updates to immunization guidelines and how the shifting federal guidance will impact vaccine insurance coverage, parents, and providers.

[Colorado pushes back against CDC's new childhood vaccine recommendations](#) from the Colorado Sun reports on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's response to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention new pediatric immunization schedule, Colorado urged residents to follow the former protocol, recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Behavioral Health and Social Determinants

[How systemic failures turn state mental hospitals into prisons](#) from NPR examines how gaps in psychiatric care contribute to the rise of incarcerating people with mental health issues. State psychiatric hospitals are plagued by staffing shortages and overwhelmed by court-ordered admissions, causing many with early-stage severe mental illness to be turned away or arrested instead of treated.

[RFK Jr.'s war on antidepressants is coming — and it will cost lives \[Opinion\]](#) from STAT explores the political and scientific debate over antidepressant use in adolescents and its implications for mental healthcare access and utilization.

[More seniors are becoming homeless. Shelters are trying to adapt](#) from NPR highlights the growing crisis of older adults experiencing homelessness and the strain on shelters and health systems.

[Colorado public school enrollment sees biggest drop since 2020 as graduation rate continues to improve](#) from the Denver Post describes declining enrollment tied to declining fertility in Colorado.

[Inside the Battle for the Future of Addiction Medicine](#) from KFF Health News highlights the challenges and successes of implementing evidence-based approaches to opioid treatment in a politically complex environment.

[The next step: Cleo Parker Robinson Dance opens new Healing Arts Center](#) from Westword covers the January 17 opening of the \$25-million, 25,000-square-foot Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Center for the Healing Arts.

Coverage, Affordability, and Care Delivery

[Worried about health insurance costs? There may be cheaper options — but with trade-offs](#) from the 19th analyzes the impact of rising insurance costs and the limited choices available to consumers seeking affordable coverage.

[Policy changes bring renewed focus on high-deductible health plans](#) from KFF examines how shifting regulations could bring significant changes to ACA Marketplace enrollment and affordability for the 2026 plan year and beyond.

[State-based efforts will provide limited relief from enhanced tax credit expiration](#) from KFF details how states are scrambling to reduce the negative impact of unsubsidized premiums on consumers.

[An emergency department leader on what 'The Pitt' gets right — and wrong](#) from CU Anschutz News explores how the CU Anschutz Emergency Department implements strategies to improve patient flow and reduce wait times in emergency care.

[Which country has the best healthcare?](#) from Doctor Mike's YouTube features Dr. Zeke Emanuel providing global comparisons of health systems and what the U.S. can learn from international models.

[Children's Hospital Colorado has suspended gender-affirming care for transgender youth amid a new federal investigation](#) from the Colorado Sun reports on the hospital's legal battle against a DOJ subpoena over its provision of gender-affirming care to youth.

The Farley Center's January health policy journal club explored issues in measuring and incentivizing quality in health care—including how quality is defined, the limitations of current metrics, and the unintended consequences of pay-for-performance programs. See all readings available at the [health policy journal club web page](#).

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Farley's Features is a monthly spotlight on critical and timely health policy issues from the Farley Health Policy Center. We focus on health policy research, translation, implementation, and education. We'd love to hear from you! Reach out to us at FarleyHealthPolicyCenter@cuanschutz.edu with any questions or comments about Farley's Features and our work in general.



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