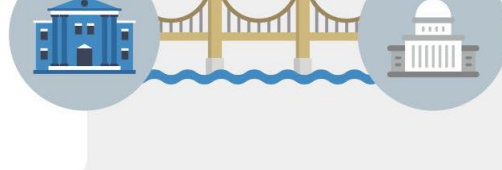


Farley's Features: June 12

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,

The past few years have seen threats to rural hospitals mount and intensify, many of them driven by changes in public policy. I've [written](#) about how last year's federal budget bill, H.R. 1, would affect rural health infrastructure. Now, with the release of Rural Health Transformation Program funds, states are at a crossroads that will help define the future of rural hospitals.

In partnership with the [Colorado Rural Futures initiative](#), the Farley Center led research to pinpoint the roadmap to strengthen and sustain these vital institutions. After analysis and synthesis of a literature review, key informant interviews, legislative scans of peer states, key stakeholder focus groups, and quantitative data, the Farley Center and the Rural Futures team [have published the results](#). This report uses data and extensive stakeholder feedback to prioritize recommendations with actionable strategies at the state, federal, and organizational levels.

Please see below for more details about this research, the final report, and to identify ways in which you can improve access to health care for rural Americans.

Sincerely,

Liza M. Creel, PhD

Affiliate Faculty, Farley Health Policy Center

Upcoming Events

Juneteenth Film Festival: Frames of Freedom

Wednesday, June 17 and Thursday, June 18
Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Center for the Healing Arts
2025 N Washington Street, Denver CO 80205

In partnership with Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, Youth Documentary Academy, and the Sundance Institute, join the Arts Alliance for Health for two evenings of film, community, and conversation to experience the stories of our vibrant communities. [Get your tickets](#).

Our Recent Publications

[From vision to action: A roadmap to strengthen and sustain rural hospitals in Colorado](#), a new report from the Farley Health Policy Center in partnership with the Colorado Rural Futures initiative, highlights urgent challenges facing rural hospitals and outlines actionable solutions to address them. Authored by Lauren Hughes, MD, MPH, Liza Creel, PhD, Vanessa Case, MS-CEP, MSHA, Sara Byers, MS, Bahroze Rakeen, PhD, and Jack Westfall, MD, MPH, this report draws on literature reviews, stakeholder interviews, policy analysis, and hospital data, to identify strategies that can stabilize and sustain rural health systems. With rural hospitals nationwide facing increasing financial pressure and policy uncertainty, this report provides timely, evidence-based recommendations at the state, federal, and organizational levels. Read the report to explore how Colorado can lead in protecting rural health care and the communities that depend on it.

[Medicaid's Role in Treating Perinatal Substance Use Disorder \(SUD\): Current Approaches and Further Considerations for Colorado](#), a new policy brief, authored by Farley Medicaid Policy Director, Hannah Crook, PhD, and Affiliate Faculty, Liza Creel, PhD, alongside Department of Family Medicine colleagues Lauren Quintana, MPH, Jennifer Halfacre, Andrew Bienstock, MHA, Thomas Bao, MPH, and Kaylie Klie, MD, MA. This brief examines Medicaid's central role as the nation's largest payer for behavioral health and maternity care, and how it supports pregnant and postpartum individuals with SUD. Read the brief to explore innovative policies in Colorado and other states aimed at improving maternal and infant health outcomes.

What We're Reading

Health Insurance & Coverage

[Cheaper. Alternative Health Plans Are Having a Moment, but Critics Urge Caution](#) from KFF Health News examines how rising ACA premiums and expiring subsidies are driving enrollment in lower-cost alternative plans that often lack consumer protections and comprehensive coverage.

[What We Know So Far About 2026 ACA Marketplace Enrollment, Premiums, and Deductibles](#) reports that enrollment is projected to decline significantly while premiums and deductibles rise sharply following the expiration of enhanced subsidies, with many consumers shifting to higher deductible plans or dropping coverage altogether.

[Why Prevention Still Struggles Financially – Even in Value-Based Care](#) from Milbank Memorial Fund explains that structural payment incentives continue to favor treatment over prevention, limiting investment in services that improve long-term population health.

[AI and Prior Authorization: As AI Makes More Health Coverage Decisions, the Risks to Patients Grow](#) from KFF Health News highlights how increasing use of AI in insurer decision-making may exacerbate denials, reduce transparency, and introduce new risks for patients seeking care.

Federal Health Landscape

[Exclusive: NSF puts new research grants to top universities on hold](#) from Nature reports that the National Science Foundation has quietly frozen new funding to several elite universities, raising concerns about transparency and the potential politicization of federal research support.

[The Effects of Recent Polarized Elections on Mental Health](#) from Milbank Quarterly finds that recent U.S. elections have measurably worsened Americans' mental health, particularly among those who perceive themselves as political or policy "losers."

[Efforts To Understand the Nation's Drugged Driving Problem Stall Under Trump](#) from KFF Health News reports that scientific progress on detecting and preventing drug-impaired driving has slowed, complicating public safety and policy efforts.

Public Health & Social Drivers of Health

[Overall homelessness dipped 12.5% in Denver in annual snapshot – the first drop in nine years](#) from The Denver Post reports that recent data show a decrease in unsheltered homelessness, indicating positive outcomes from regional strategy and Mayor Mike Johnston's "All In Mile High" homelessness program.

[Why isn't alcohol seen as a U.S. health emergency?](#) from STAT examines how alcohol-related harms remain underrecognized in public policy despite significant impacts on morbidity, mortality, and health system costs.

[Troubling racial health disparities still exist — join me in a fight for equity and access \(Opinion\)](#) from The Denver Post highlights ongoing inequities in access, treatment, and outcomes for Black Coloradans, underscoring the role of community-based organizations such as the Center for African American Health in advancing health equity.

[Cooling Our Communities: A Policy Playbook for Extreme Heat](#) from the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health's Healthy Climate America Podcast focuses on how health professionals, policy makers, advocates, communicators, and activists are working at the intersection of climate change and public health.

State Health Policy

[Tiny patients, big fight: NICU parents win leave in 2 states and push for more](#) from CPR News highlights gaps in family leave for parents of newborns in intensive care and explores policy options to support families during extended hospitalizations.

[Colorado midwives sue state, saying regulators are making it harder for them to safely do their jobs](#) from The Colorado Sun reports on a class-action lawsuit alleging that state regulatory practices are limiting midwives' ability to practice, potentially worsening access to maternity care in rural "maternity deserts."

[Colorado Supreme Court rules in favor of families seeking gender-affirming care, orders Children's Hospital Colorado to resume it](#) from CPR News explores legal challenges that could affect how providers deliver care and how states regulate treatment for transgender youth.

[How can Colorado help kids facing mental health struggles? These teens have ideas for the next governor](#) from The Colorado Sun examines how policymakers and advocates are pushing for comprehensive, system-wide reforms to address persistent gaps in access and coordination of care for young people experiencing mental health challenges.

Colorado's 2026 Legislative Session

[The 6 biggest themes of Colorado's 2026 legislative session](#) from The Colorado Sun outlines key policy trends, including budget constraints, health care access, and behavioral health, that shaped this year's legislative agenda.

[Colorado Legislature Wraps Up 2026 Session](#) (video) from Next 9News summarizes major outcomes of the legislative session in less than 90 seconds, including decisions affecting health care, behavioral health, and state budget priorities.

[2026 Legislative Scorecard](#) from the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative reviews key health-related bills from the session, highlighting wins, setbacks, and implications for coverage and affordability.

[A look back at the 2026 Colorado legislative session](#) (podcast) from The Colorado Sun's podcast, Daily Sun-Up, reflects on major policy developments and political dynamics emerging from the state's recent legislative session.

The Farley Center's June health policy journal club explored the growing corporatization of U.S. health care through a curated series from the New England Journal of Medicine. This month's articles examined how profit-driven models are reshaping health systems, including impacts on hospitals, physicians, insurance, and health equity. See all readings available at the [health policy journal club web page](#).

Subscribe to Farley's Features

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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