Advocacy Toolkit for Colorado's Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Grant Program

What's at Stake

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has proposed to eliminate the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education (CHSE) Grant Program from the FY 2026-27 budget.

Why it Matters

The CHSE program provides $1 million in funding to help public schools, districts, and charter schools implement and deliver comprehensive human sexuality education that is:

- medically accurate,
- age appropriate,
- inclusive,
- non-stigmatizing, and
- culturally sensitive.

Without this funding, many schools—especially those in rural communities—will not have the resources to continue teaching CHSE or to expand this essential education to communities across Colorado that still lack access.

How You Can Help

This toolkit outlines advocacy strategies to share how the CHSE grant program has had a positive impact on communities across Colorado. Use these resources to urge the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) to vote against the proposed elimination of the CHSE Grant Program.

As of February 11th, the top priority actions are:

- Contact members of the Joint Budget Committee
- Sign on to the Letter of Support (for organizations and school districts only) by end of day February 26th
- Promote awareness about the CHSE Grant Program to your network

Quick Links

- Find Your Legislator
- Review Talking Points

- Contact Your Legislator
- Sign on to our Letter of Support
- Share our Letter of Support
- Sign Up to Testify to the Joint Budget Committee
- Media to Spread Awareness

Step 1: Find your Local House Representative and Senator

Thank you to those that have already emailed and called your representatives and senators! There is still time to express your support for preserving the CHSE grant program until March 3rd.

- Visit Find My Legislator and enter your home address.
- Your Representative and Senator will pop up, including their email address and phone number.
- Check whether your Representative or Senator serves on the Joint Budget Committee. If they do, be sure to mention that directly in the script below. Members include:

    - Rep. Kyle Brown (HD-12), kyle.brown.house@coleg.gov
    - Rep. Emily Sirota (HD-9), emily.sirota.house@coleg.gov
    - Rep. Rick Taggart (HD-55), rick.taggart.house@coleg.gov
    - Sen. Judy Amabile (SD-18), judy.amabile.senate@coleg.gov
    - Sen. Jeff Bridges (SD-26), jeff.bridges.senate@coleg.gov
    - Sen. Barbara Kirkmeyer (SD-23), barbara.kirkmeyer.senate@coleg.gov

- Take two quick actions to make your voice heard:
    - **Email all members of the Joint Budget Committee (JBC).**
        - Send one email to the full JBC using the same sample message. This sends a powerful signal to the entire committee that there is strong, statewide community support for this program
        - We are hoping to flood the JBC with emails in support of the CHSE grant program before March 3rd!
        - Sign up here for coordinated outreach to the JBC through Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0545AFAA2CA2F8CF8-61721021-help#/
    - **Email or call your legislator.**
        - Use the sample message below to contact your representative and senator. As their constituent, urge them to share your concerns with the Joint Budget Committee.

Step 2: Review Talking Points

Key Talking points

These key messages are informed by a collaborative of organizations and community members working in sexual and reproductive health and education across Colorado, including guidance from SIECUS, a national partner:

1. Cutting this funding will remove proven protections from young people.

- The elimination of this funding will functionally end the state's comprehensive sex education program, wiping out years of hard-earned progress.
- Started during Governor Polis's first term, this program shows Colorado's belief that every young person deserves to be healthy, safe, and included.

2. The program is a vital lifeline for LGBTQ+ youth.

- This program creates safe , affirming learning environments for young people, especially LGBTQ+ students who have long faced stigma and exclusion.
- Cutting or suspending funding, even temporarily, will undo that progress and send a devastating message to students who have finally begun to feel seen and supported.

3. Colorado's leadership is needed now more than ever.

- At a time when the federal government is actively attempting to rescind national sex education funding, states like Colorado must lead, not retreat.
- As major private philanthropic foundations step back from funding sex education to address the widespread attacks on sexual health, state leadership has become the only reliable way to ensure students receive medically accurate sex education in Colorado.

4. Failing to fund this program will deepen inequities across the state.

- Large districts like Denver may be able to continue some programming, but most districts across Colorado—especially rural and mountain communities—cannot.
- This program was intentionally implemented to reduce inequities by prioritizing rural districts. Cutting it would widen the divide and leave young people in already underserved communities further behind.
- For many of these communities, this program is the only source of medically accurate, inclusive education about relationships, consent, and sexual health—without it, young people are left in an information desert, vulnerable to misinformation and stigma.

5. Governor Polis's legacy is on the line.

- Governor Polis has built a strong legacy of inclusion and equality for LGBTQ+ Coloradans.
- This decision risks undermining that legacy by dismantling one of the state's most effective tools for protecting and empowering LGBTQ+ youth.

- Continuing this funding would affirm Colorado's national leadership and uphold the Governor's vision for equity, dignity, and opportunity for all young people.

6. Investing in Comprehensive Sex Education saves state money in the long run.

- Research shows that CHSE actually saves states money in the long run by reducing public expenditures on unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and other health resources.
- Cost-related research on CHSE is limited, but one study found that for every dollar invested in their CHSE program, $2.65 was saved in medical and social costs by preventing pregnancy and STI's.
- An investment of **$1 million** in comprehensive sex education saves the state **$2.65 million**, for a **net savings of $1.65 million** after the initial investment.

7. With access to comprehensive sex education, positive health outcomes increase.

- Improves academic success
- Prevents sexual abuse, child sexual abuse, dating violence, and bullying
- Helps youth develop healthier relationships
- Delays timing of sexual debut and increases safer sex practices
- Improves media literacy

Step 3: Call or Email the JBC and your Legislators

Think about your personal interest. Who are you? Why do you care about the potential elimination of this program? How will it impact you, your family, your schools,or your community?

Personalize this call/email script:

Hello [Your Representative or Senator],

Use this paragraph if you are contacting the JBC: My name is **[Your Name]** and I live in **[city/town]**, zip code **[Zip code number]**. I am **calling/writing** to urge you to vote against eliminating the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Grant Program, which is included in the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's budget proposal.

Use this paragraph if you are contacting your legislator and they are not on the JBC: My name is **[Your Name]** and I live in **[city/town]**, zip code **[Zip code number]**. I am **calling/writing** to urge you to communicate my concerns to your colleagues on the Joint Budget Committee against eliminating the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Grant Program, which is included in the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's budget proposal.

Ending this funding would effectively dismantle Colorado's comprehensive sex education infrastructure and erase years of measurable progress. The CHSE Grant Program is one of the state's most effective tools for ensuring students receive medically accurate, inclusive, and age-appropriate education - especially LGBTQ+ youth, who too often face stigma, misinformation, and erasure in schools.

I am especially concerned about losing this program because **[add your personal interest and message here, which can include highlights from talking points above]**.

Use this paragraph if you are contacting the JBC: Colorado has long been a leader in evidence-based, inclusive education. I urge you to uphold that leadership by voting against the elimination of the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Grant Program and protecting an investment that supports student health, safety, and dignity.

Use this paragraph if you are contacting your legislator and they are not on the JBC: Colorado has long been a leader in evidence-based, inclusive education. As your constituent, I urge you to uphold this leadership by expressing my concerns about the proposed elimination of the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Program to your colleagues on the Joint Budget Committee.

Conclude the phone call with your name and contact information.

Example Email:

Hello Representative Sirota,

My name is John Smith, and I am a constituent living in Denver, zip code 80209. I am writing to urge you to oppose the elimination of the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Grant Program in the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's budget proposal.

Ending this funding would effectively dismantle Colorado's comprehensive sex education infrastructure and erase years of measurable progress. The CHSE Grant Program is one of the state's most effective tools for ensuring students receive medically accurate, inclusive, and age-appropriate education - especially LGBTQ+ youth, who too often face stigma, misinformation, and erasure in schools.

I am especially concerned about the proposed elimination of this program because I am the parent of a queer child in high school. I believe in the value of my child getting access to comprehensive sex education in their formal education and this money ensures that that happens. This information is essential to my child feeling affirmed and

safe at school. In a time where queer youth are being targeted, I hope Colorado will take a stand for youth.

Colorado has long been a leader in evidence-based, inclusive education. I urge you to uphold that leadership by voting against the elimination of the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Grant Program and protecting an investment that supports student health, safety, and dignity.

Sincerely,

John Smith
john@email.email

Step 4: Sign on to our letter of support

- Trailhead Institute has written a letter of support urging the Joint Budget Committee to vote NO on eliminating the CHSE Grant Program.
    - Read the statement and sign your organization onto this letter to demonstrate widespread support for the CHSE Grant Program!
- We have received over 60 signatures from Colorado organizations and school districts. We are continuing to collect signatures and will be resending our letter to the JBC by end of day on February 26th.

Step 5: Share our letter of support

- Share our letter of support on social media and with your networks
    - **Option 1:** Reshare Trailhead Institute's LinkedIn post sharing out the Letter of Support
    - **Option 2:** Share out the Letter of Support with the suggested caption below:
        - Suggested caption: "This legislative session, Colorado's Joint Budget Committee (JBC) is considering a proposal to eliminate $1 million in funding for the Comprehensive Human Sexuality Education Grant Program.

          If this cut goes through, it will effectively end the state's comprehensive sex education program – undoing years of progress that has helped students make informed, healthy decisions and supported schools across Colorado.

          This funding supports educators, families, and young people in every corner of the state. Losing it would mean fewer trained teachers, fewer resources for schools, and fewer students getting the education they deserve.

You can make a difference today:
-> Call and email members of the Joint Budget Committee
-> Add your organization's name to the sign-on letter to the JBC.
-> Share this post and help spread the word.

Everything you need to take action is in Trailhead Institute's advocacy toolkit: CHSE Advocacy Toolkit "

Testimony Closed

Over 12 organizations and individuals testified on February 2nd, expressing support for the CHSE grant program. Many organizations and people also submitted written testimony to the JBC. Thank you to the many that took the time to prepare testimony and share your stories.

Please note that the Joint Budget Committee does not always allow public testimony and usually focuses on agency briefings. However, at times they do allow public comments on budget decisions, including the proposed elimination of the CHSE Grant Program.

1. Visit the Colorado General Assembly's Testimony Signup page to register to testify virtually or in person on **February 2nd**.
2. Select whether you will:
    - testify in person,
    - remotely via Zoom, or
    - submit a written testimony.
3. If you are testifying **IN PERSON:**
    - Select: **By Committee and Hearing Item**
    - Committee Name: **Joint Budget Committee**
    - Meeting and Date Time: **02/02/2026 01:30PM**
    - Hearing Item: **Joint Budget Committee Consideration of Public Testimony Concerning the FY 2026-27 Budget Requests**
    - Fill out contact information on final page and click "Signup"
4. To testify **remotely** or through **written testimony**, you must still sign up in advance.

Preparing to Testify

The Joint Budget Committee heard testimony related to the CHSE Grant Program on February 2nd. Review the testifying strategies below to support advocacy for other bills and legislative action this year.

- **Review the One Colorado guide** on testifying at the Colorado State Capitol to learn what to expect and get helpful tips for testifying in person.
- **Prepare your testimony.** Each person typically has 2–3 minutes to testify. Aim for 300–350 words so there's room to slow down, emphasize key points, and stay under time.

Craft your message:

- **Start with who you are and why you care** about protecting access to comprehensive sexual health education in Colorado.
    - Introduce yourself, including your name and the general location where you live.

- **State the issue**, including why you are here today and connecting it to shared values.
    - Data and facts can be important during testimony, but personal stories and connection to the issue can be more effective to shift perspectives and inspire action.

- **Share the stakes.** Focus on how this elimination will impact your life, your family, and your community.
    - It's important for members of the Joint Budget Committee to understand what communities will experience without this funding. When you think about what's at stake, consider how these questions might apply to your own community:

        - Will your school or district be able to continue offering strong, well-rounded health education? Will districts have to lay off staff who support student learning and well-being? Will teachers lose access to the training they need to effectively support students? Will families lose opportunities to learn, ask questions, and stay connected to what's happening in schools?

        - How have young people in your community benefited from learning skills that support their health, relationships, and decision-making? How has your school environment improved when students learn about respect, communication, and inclusion?

- **Close with making a clear call to action.**
    - "I urge you to vote NO on eliminating the CHSE Grant Program."
    - Thank the legislators for their time and attention.

Practice self-care before, during and after:

It can be vulnerable and adrenaline inducing to share your testimony with legislators. Consider what you might need to do to care for yourself before, during and after you testify:

- Get a good night of sleep beforehand
- Wear something you feel comfortable and confident in
- Afterwards, be kind to yourself and celebrate the time you took to advocate for your community. Sometimes testifying doesn't go as planned. Maybe you get cut off, time runs out, etc. What matters is you showed up!
- Treat yourself

Media to Spread Awareness

- **Colorado Sun |** Opinion: Colorado's plan to cut sexual health education funding would erase real gains for rural students
- **Colorado Politics** | Polis' Removal of Sex Ed Funding Endangers LGBTQ+ Youth by Shara Smith
- **Video** | Community Voices and Experiences with CHSE in Colorado, Rural Story
- **Video** | Community Voices and Experiences with CHSE in Colorado, Urban Story
- **Colorado State of Adolescent Sexual Health Report** | Anti-Oppressive Recommendations for the State of Colorado
- **The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) Impact One Pager** | Colorado Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CHSE) Grant Program