

The focus of the Health Care Affordability Group is on increasing health care affordability for Colorado consumers. Our north star for this work is individuals, families, patients and communities. Members of the group include:

- Chronic Care Collaborative
- Colorado Association of Health Plans
- Colorado BioScience Association
- Colorado Center on Law and Policy
- Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
- Colorado Hospital Association
- Colorado Medical Society
- Healthier Colorado

The attached Health Care Affordability Framework was developed with the input and consensus of all members of the Health Care Affordability Group. We want to be clear, however, that the framework does not speak for individuals, families and communities in Colorado, or for other health care stakeholders. We urge state leaders and policy makers to engage Coloradans directly when working to address issues of health care affordability and we request regular and consistent stakeholder engagement, partnership and collaboration during the development and implementation of health care affordability policy solutions. This framework does not determine any group member's position on a specific bill or policy proposal. Each member organization in the Health Care Affordability Group will evaluate specific policy proposals to determine whether it meets the principles and take a position accordingly.

Health Care Affordability Framework

The Health Care Affordability Group¹ recognizes that health care affordability is a top concern for Coloradans, 58% of whom reported experiencing one or more healthcare affordability burdens in the prior 12 months.² In 2019, 18% of Coloradans reported problems paying or were unable to pay medical bills, and 33% of those families were unable to afford basic necessities like food, heat or rent as a consequence of problems paying medical bills.³ 15% of Coloradans overall have medical debt in collection, and—due to structural barriers to health care and coverage—1 in 4 Coloradans living in communities of color have medical debt in collections.⁴ Unfortunately, adults in worse health are more likely than others to have difficulty accessing medical care due to costs.⁵

To increase the affordability of health care for Colorado consumers, the group supports the adoption of affordability policy solutions that align with the key principles outlined below. The group also recommends Colorado establish a health care affordability standard⁶ to measure the impact of affordability policy solutions on increasing health care affordability for all Coloradans, and to avoid unintended consequences of policy ideas.

Affordability policy solutions should:

- Work to ensure individuals and families are able to get the care they need without unreasonable cost or administrative barriers, with particular attention to the uninsured and underinsured populations.
- Be developed with the engagement of individuals, families and communities from diverse backgrounds.
- Advance health equity and align with the principles of the Triple Aim: lower cost, better quality, and improved outcomes.
- Recognize the role of consumers and consumer information and choice in health care.

¹Members include: Colorado Consumer Health Initiative, Colorado Hospital Association, Healthier Colorado, Colorado Medical Society, Colorado Center on Law and Policy, Colorado Association of Health Plans, Colorado Chronic Care Collaborative and Colorado Bioscience Association.

² [Altarum Healthcare Value Hub](#), a nonprofit organization supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with the mission of creating a better, more sustainable future for all Americans by applying research-based and field-tested solutions that transform our systems of health and healthcare. Altarum's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey (CHESS) surveyed 970 Colorado adults from December 20, 2018 to January 2, 2019.

³ [2019 Colorado Health Access Survey: Progress in Peril](#), Colorado Health Institute

⁴ [Debt in America: An Interactive Map](#), 2019

⁵ [What is "affordable" health care](#), United States of Care, 2019

⁶ A health care affordability standard is an analytic tool used to measure and understand the potential for policy effectiveness, to inform policy making to maximize positive impact, and to avoid unintended consequences of proposed ideas. [State Efforts to Standardize Consumer Affordability](#), United States of Care, 2019

- Ensure the long-term sustainability of a high-quality health care system in Colorado that supports innovation and sufficient network adequacy⁷ across the state.
- Drive competition and collaboration by aligning all hospitals, doctors and other providers and payers with a shared goal and shared incentives.
- Recognize the interrelated nature of the environment in which health care operates and how changes in one market/systems can affect others.

Colorado's Health Care Affordability Standard should:

- Account for total out of pocket costs, including premiums, co-pays, co-insurance, deductibles, and out-of-pocket-maximums.
- Consider the underlying costs (including utilization and prices) for healthcare services and products and how those costs impact total out of pocket costs for consumers.
- Establish the affordable share of household income spent on health care, with appropriate consideration of individuals' and families' budgetary requirements for other essentials and basic self-sufficiency, irrespective of family size, location, income level or degree of illness.
- Include quantitative and qualitative metrics and leverage state resources such as the Colorado Health Access Survey, the Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard and the All-Payers Claims Database.
- Acknowledge the work of the Primary Care Payment Reform Collaborative to increase health care affordability in Colorado.
- Allow for comparability with other states.

⁷ Network adequacy refers to a health plan's ability to deliver the benefits promised by providing reasonable access to enough in-network primary care and specialty physicians, and all health care services included under the terms of the contract.