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Director's Note

This year, the Colorado Legislative Session presented its own set of challenges. COVID-19 continued taking lives in our state, and economic insecurity increased within many families in our communities. Advocates on the ground worked tirelessly to bring legislative solutions to tackle the injustices this pandemic brought to the forefront, including lack of access to healthcare, housing, and food for our families. We are so proud of the work we accomplished, and are honored to share these wins with you.

"WORKING ALONGSIDE MANY ADVOCATES IN DIFFERENT FIELDS, WE COLLECTIVELY ORGANIZED, STRATEGIZED, AND DELIVERED."

Working alongside many advocates in different fields, we collectively organized, strategized, and delivered. Some of the incredible wins this year at the Capitol were years in the making, and it was due to our collective effort, strength and perseverance. It was a historic session, and we can now celebrate the beauty of our shared wins together.

From creating a program under Medicaid that provides free contraceptives to undocumented Coloradans to creating protections for farmworkers in the state, while also enhancing protections in the birth justice space — all of these were accomplished because of one goal — to provide resources to our communities so that we can all thrive.

Thank you to all of our amazing partners, allies, and legislators for helping turn SB9 from a messaging bill into law in just one session. And a very special thanks to the impacted community members from rural Southwest Colorado who had the courage to tell their stories. We couldn't have done this without you.

Karla Gonzales Garcia, Policy Director
COLOR works to engage and empower the Latinx community to speak out about the policies that impact us most.

A true Reproductive Justice framework allows us to look beyond reproductive health and rights, and incorporate a broader range of issues. Economic, sexual, racial, immigration and health factors keep many people from making personal decisions about their reproductive lives.

We work with community in coalition with partner organizations and elected officials to identify policy solutions that address these intersecting issues, so that we are each able to live safe, healthy and self-determined lives.

"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SINGLE-ISSUE STRUGGLE BECAUSE WE DO NOT LEAD SINGLE-ISSUE LIVES."

AUDRE LORDE

In 2021, our policy work centered:

- Healthcare and insurance
- Protections for pregnant people
- Immigrant justice
- Labor rights
- LGBTQ+ youth protections
- Voter rights
- Reproductive healthcare
- Economic justice
We know the last year has been especially challenging for our communities, but there is truly cause to celebrate as we wrap up the 2021 state legislative session. COLOR led a dynamic campaign and secured the passage of Senate Bill 9, which creates a Reproductive Health Care Program to provide contraception through Medicaid to undocumented people and allows anyone who uses Medicaid to receive a one-year supply of oral contraceptives.

**This groundbreaking legislation will make a huge difference in the lives of Coloradans, and is being celebrated by advocates across the country.**

We spoke out and provided testimony on 26 bills this year — 19 in support and 7 in opposition. Our leadership and expertise ensured the needs and lived experiences of Latinx people in Colorado were centered and respected.

COLOR also led the planning of the 15th annual Latino/a Advocacy Day — our quinceañera! We supported our coalition partners in Reproductive Freedom Lobby Day and Women and Family Wednesday, and ensured our Latinx communities were represented in the lobbying process. These lobby events, although virtual, were a wonderful way to bring community together after so much time apart and advocate for the policies that directly impact us.

In addition, the policy team created and delivered our first ever COLOR Policy Briefings. Each week during session, we went live on Facebook to discuss happenings at the Capitol, hear from guest speakers on their policy priorities, and do our best to make policy jargon and processes accessible to our people.

The 2021 legislative session definitely had its own unique challenges and we’ve heard from many legislators that it was one of the toughest sessions yet, but we made it happen and we definitely made a difference!

*Our ancestors are proud.*
This year, Latino/a Advocacy Day (LAD) celebrated its quinceañera! Different than previous years where hundreds of participants travel to Denver from across the state to lobby and advocate at the Capitol, this year was an all-virtual event bringing together 145 participants per day on Zoom. We discussed the need to continue to engage in movement building, and felt deep connection in sharing our stories during the pandemic.

In collaboration with partner organizations around Colorado, LAD provided participants with workshops, trainings, entertainment and the opportunity to lobby their elected officials on issues that matter most to us.

**Workshops offered:**
- Reproductive Justice, led by COLOR
- Immigrant Justice, led by CIRC
- Criminal Justice, led by ACLU
- Environmental Justice, led by Protégete
- Economic Justice, lead by 9to5

**The program included included:**
- COVID-19 and the Importance of the Vaccine
- Lobbying 101
- Denver Clerk and Recorder on the importance of Latinx voter empowerment.

**Co-conveners:**
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC); Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy and Research Organization (CLLARO); Mi Familia Vota; Protégete; Voces Unidas de las Montañas
Women and Family Wednesdays is a collaborative effort between 9to5, ACLU, COLOR, NARAL, PPRM, and Protégete. Each Wednesday during legislative session, participants discuss issues and policies that directly impact them. This week focused solely on SB21-009.

Following workshops and trainings, participants sent letters to their elected officials stating that immigration status should not determine who gets to decide if and when to become parents or how to build their families. Legislators were asked for their support and a yes vote on this important bill.

In collaboration with the Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice (RHRJ) coalition and other organizations across the state, COLOR joined in bringing forth Reproductive Freedom Lobby Day.

A total of 200 participants spent the day attending virtual workshops and trainings and were able to speak to 13 elected officials on the policy of their choosing. COLOR’s Policy Manager led a Lobbying 102 training and spoke about COLOR’s bill, SB21-009, so participants felt ready to chat with their elected officials. Other featured policies included SB21-016, SB21-142, SB21-57, HB21-1200 and SB21-101.
For the past four years, COLOR’s Community Organizer Gina Millan, has hosted a weekly radio show, Mujeres de COLOR, and gained a wide and loyal audience of Spanish-speakers across Colorado who care about issues like immigration, abortion and Reproductive Justice. This year Gina began hosting Jueves con COLOR, a weekly Facebook live, focused mainly on policy issues in Colorado. Throughout session, COLOR’s Policy Director served as a guest on both shows to relay policy information, share updates and answer questions from listeners. These shows are an efficient way to reach our Spanish audience and discuss topics that are misunderstood, taboo or purposefully inaccessible.
COLOR breaks down our policy priorities into three tiers, based on level of support and advocacy. For more information on our tiering system, see Appendix. Here are our tiered policy priorities for 2021.

**TIER ONE**

**SB21-009 | PASSED**

**REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAM**

Contraceptive use helps people realize their own reproductive goals which, in turn, helps them achieve their educational, employment, and financial ambitions. This bill creates a program within Colorado Medicaid that provides contraception to undocumented folks and allows anyone who uses Medicaid to receive a year supply at one time.

SB 9 was initially a three to five year messaging bill. With the pandemic and rumors of a slim budget, we intended to use this year to educate community, legislators and others on contraception as healthcare and the intersections with racial justice, economic justice and immigrant rights. Instead, the meaningful relationships with legislators held by our Policy Director and lobby team helped catapult our bill to the top priority for the Democratic Women’s Caucus, Latino Caucus and Colorado Senate. Additionally, strong connections with partner organizations helped us anchor SB 9 in the health care space, rather than being confined to just reproductive health or immigrant rights. Immigration status should not determine who has access to care or not. By staying true to our values and messaging, SB 9 was successful in creating the infrastructure that allows undocumented people to receive services through Medicaid. COLOR is proud to advance legislation that addresses obstacles to care that low-income and people of color need to manage their health and live with dignity — and this is just the beginning!
These bills were two of the most contentious pieces of legislation this session. Because they worked to dismantle and replace decades of racist and oppressive policy in the state and were radical in their inclusion and protections for communities, some Colorado Democrats were even in opposition. It was only through unwavering advocacy from community members, advocates, lobbyists, and others that these bills passed and remained strong in their intent and impact.

**HB21-1232 | PASSED**

**STANDARDIZED HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN, CO OPTION**

COVID-19 laid bare the deeply embedded racism in our systems, specifically within health care. The Latinx community has historically faced disparities in access to high quality care and due to systemic barriers, many of our families are more likely to forego access to services we need for chronic health conditions due to financial barriers. With the Colorado Option, our state has taken big steps to address the high cost of health care and begun to close the gaps in accessing care for communities that were left out of the ACA, including those without documentation. Coloradans across the state will now be able to choose from more affordable, standardized, and accessible health care options. This bill also puts more money into financial assistance, which will substantially help communities of color who are being priced out of the system.

**SB21-087 | PASSED**

**AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' RIGHTS**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, agricultural workers were deemed essential yet still denied critical labor rights. With the historic passing of SB 87, Colorado is the first state to adopt sweeping legislation that addresses structural racism in agricultural labor laws. The bill establishes fairer wages; the right to collective action and ability to unionize; protections against overwork and heat stress; banning of the short-handled hoe and limitations on extensive stooping; ability to access key service providers and basic necessities; protection from retaliation; and, a forum for public participation. This bill is being praised by workers, immigrant and labor rights groups, public health officials, activists and so many more. Here at COLOR, many of us have a personal connection to agricultural work, so this is especially meaningful.
**Policy Priorities**

**TIER THREE**

**SB21-101/SB21-193/SB21-194 | PASSED**

**BIRTH EQUITY BILL PACKAGE**

Colorado’s first ever maternity-care bill package is historic, complex, and one of the boldest pieces of legislation in the country. Comprised of three bills, the package works to increase protections for pregnant people and address some of the deepest racial inequities in the perinatal period. Colorado will now extend Medicaid postpartum coverage up to one year. People who are incarcerated while pregnant will have a higher standard of care, access and supplies during the perinatal period, including contact with their baby and breastfeeding support. The package also addresses insurance inequities, improves grievance processes for those who were mistreated during labor, birth and postpartum, requires hospitals to allow doulas and ensures that facilities support a trial of labor after cesarean so families are not coerced into unnecessary surgeries. This package is a huge step forward and is being celebrated as the first of its kind!

**SB21-131 | PASSED**

**PROTECT PERSONAL IDENTIFYING INFO KEPT BY CO**

Last year, CIRC learned that ICE was accessing information from the DMV that Coloradans had given when receiving their driver’s licenses. This bill will stop agencies like ICE from accessing personal data from state agencies to target people for immigration enforcement. Community leaders, partners, the IDrive Coalition and bill sponsors worked to stop this data sharing and rebuild trust. SB131 will block requests for state data from third parties like ICE unless they are for an active criminal (not immigration) case and have a subpoena or a warrant signed by a judge.

**HB21-1194 | PASSED**

**IMMIGRATION LEGAL DEFENSE FUND**

Immigrants facing deportation do not have the right to an attorney unless they can afford one. According to TRAC data, only 9% of cases tried from 2001-2018 were successful without an attorney while 91% of successful cases were represented by a lawyer. This bill creates a statewide fund so that any Coloradan facing deportation may qualify to receive a lawyer, pro bono. Colorado is the first state to do this through state legislature.
Each year, we provide solidarity support to partner organizations and legislative efforts that will positively impact our communities. This could be through testimony, communications support, sign-ons or action alerts — whatever the bill need to make it across the finish line!

**SB21-016 | PASSED**  
PROTECTING PREVENTIVE HEALTH COVERAGE

**SB21-025 | PASSED**  
FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE FOR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS

**SB21-027 | PASSED**  
EMERGENCY SUPPLIES FOR CO BABIES & FAMILIES

**SB21-077 | PASSED**  
REMOVE LAWFUL PRESENCE VERIFICATION

**SB21-142 | PASSED**  
MEDICAID ABORTION COVERAGE FOR SURVIVORS

**SB21-169 | PASSED**  
RESTRICT INSURERS’ USE OF EXTERNAL CONSUMER DATA

**SB21-176 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**  
POWR ACT

**HB21-1011 | PASSED**  
MULTILINGUAL BALLOT ACCESS FOR VOTERS

**HB21-1060 | PASSED**  
U VISA CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

**HB21-1072 | PASSED**  
EQUAL ACCESS SERVICES FOR OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS

**HB21-1105 | PASSED**  
LOW-INCOME UTILITY PAYMENT ASSISTANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

**HB21-1150 | PASSED**  
CREATE THE CO OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

**HB21-1198 | PASSED**  
HEALTHCARE BILLING REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIGENT PATIENTS

**HB21-1256 | PASSED**  
HEALTHCARE SERVICES THROUGH TELEHEALTH
Every legislative session brings with it a handful of bills that could negatively impact our communities. Success, at the policy level, is as much about defeating this harmful legislation as it is passing bills we support.

**HB21-1053 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**

**ELECTION RECOUNT REQUESTS**

**HB21-1086 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**

**VOTER PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP**

**HB21-1088 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**

**ANNUAL AUDIT STATEWIDE VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM**

**HB21-1170 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**

**ADVISEMENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS & IT**

**HB21-1176 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**

**ELECTION INTEGRITY & VOTER ACCURACY**

**HB21-1017 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**

**PROTECT HUMAN LIFE AT CONCEPTION**

**HB21-1183 | POSTPONED INDEFINITELY**

**INDUCED TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY STATE REGISTRAR**
THE 2021 COLOR POLICY TEAM:

- Karla Gonzales Garcia — Policy Director, transitioned out of COLOR June 2021
- Katherine Riley — Policy Manager, Interim Policy Director effective July 1, 2021
- Brenda Negrete — Youth of COLOR Policy Fellow
- Mary Alice Mandarich — Lobbyist
- True Apodaca — Lobbyist
- Morgan Meneses-Sheets — Communications Consultant
- Elizabeth Baskett — Medicaid Consultant

APPENDIX INCLUDES:

- Bill Text
- Fiscal Note
- Research
- Talking Points
- Testimony Speaking Panels
- Submitted Written Testimony
- Policy Tiers & Treatment