



# Alliance SUMMIT

United For People with  
Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities



# **2026 Presidential Address**

**Tara Kiene, CEO of Community Connections Inc.**



# **2026 State of the Association Address**

**Joshua Rael, Executive Director of Alliance**



# **2026 Alliance Legislator of the Year**

**Rep. Rick Taggart from Grand Junction**



# **The Year's Key Policy Changes**

**(...so far)**

**Ellen Jensby, Public Policy Director, Alliance**

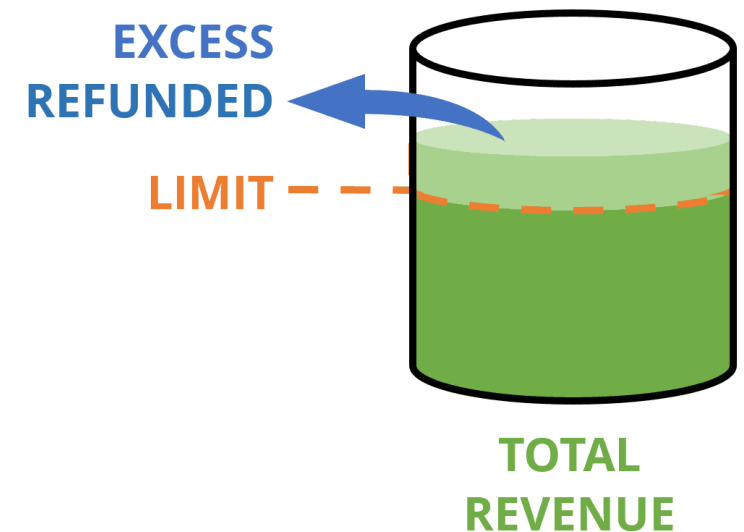


# The 2026 Legislative Session: State Budget Review

- Most difficult budget year since the Great Recession
- Medicaid enrollment, utilization, and spending continued to grow faster than previous estimates
- Consensus that Medicaid's rate of growth is unsustainable
- Policymakers focused on
  - Growth outliers
  - Family caregiving policies
  - Aligning policy across similar services or with other states
- **View [Alliance's Detailed Budget Tracker](#) to view all budget actions we followed**

# Colorado Budget Crisis: How'd we get here?

- Has been coming for some time – not a sudden event
- The result of structural rules, rising costs, and policy changes that have been building pressure for decades
- Taxpayer's bill of Rights – “TABOR” – is the biggest structural factor. It:
  - Limits how much revenue the state can keep regardless of real needs
    - TABOR cap grew 39% since 2018-19, while Medicaid spending grew 86%
  - Requires voter approval for tax increases, so Colorado is unusually constrained compared to most states
  - Requires tax refunds even when the state has unmet needs
  - Limit grows by inflation + population growth
- Federal pandemic aid masked the issue for a few years



# Why is the crisis hitting now?



- In 2025, legislators used up most of their budget “tricks” to balance budget without significant cuts
- Federal pandemic aid has expired
- H.R. 1
  - Changed the way taxes work, creating an immediate hole in the state budget from lost state tax revenue.
  - Cuts federal Medicaid funding over time via provider tax phase-down
  - Increases states’ administrative Medicaid costs through more frequent eligibility redeterminations and work requirements

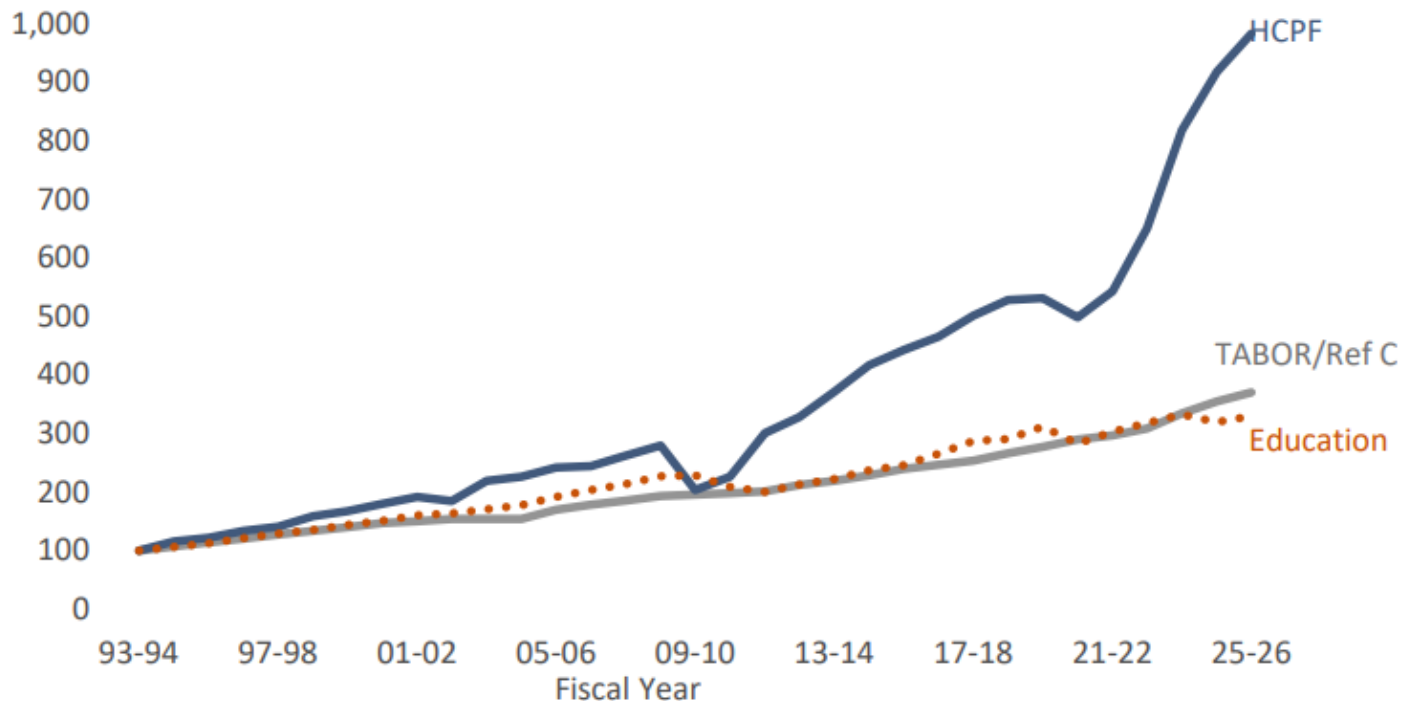
# Last August to Now – a quick recap

- Special Legislative Session gave the Governor authority to identify emergency budget reduction ideas
- Executive Order proposed changes to services that are outliers in utilization and spending
- The timelines for these changes awkwardly overlapped with the annual legislative budget process, regulatory process, and federal approvals
- The result? Profound confusion and chaos.



# Why is Medicaid a focus for budget cuts?

General Fund appropriations for Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) are growing faster than the TABOR/Referendum C limit

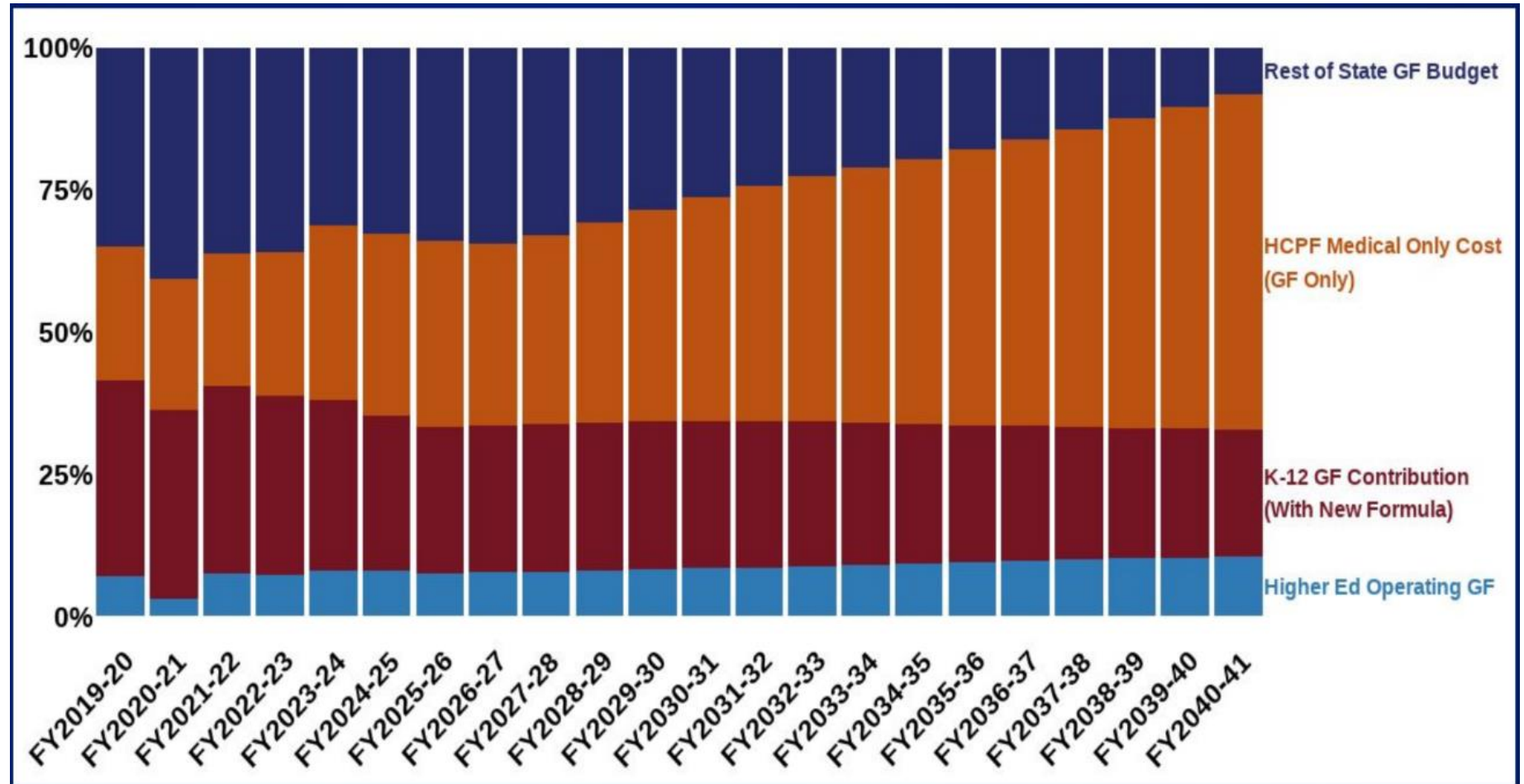


See page 5 [here](#).

- Medicaid is the single largest expense for Colorado and makes up over one-third of our state's budget
- The growth has multiple causes:
  - Rising medical costs
  - Coverage expansions
  - Rate increases
  - Enrollment and utilization

# Why is Medicaid a focus for budget cuts?

- Medicaid's growth is taking up more and more of the budget, leaving less for other important public programs like education, transportation, and public safety



See slide 9 [here](#).



# Support for LTSS

- Long-term services and supports for people with disabilities and chronic health conditions serve just 4-5% of Medicaid enrollees in Colorado, but represent 42% of the program's claims costs
- Community-based long-term care services are cost-effective alternatives to institutional care and produce better outcomes, saving states money
- Colorado legislators broadly support services for people with disabilities



# Key Budget Actions of the Past Year

Soft Caps on Personal Care, Homemaker, and Health Maintenance Activities

Cap on Homemaker hours provided by legally responsible persons

Cap on hours worked by individual caregivers

## Community Connector

- Rate reductions totaling 38%
- Reduced unit cap by half
- Tightened criteria to those with extraordinary needs

Member cost of care (PETI) added to the DD waiver

Reducing DD waiver “churn” enrollments and ending automatic youth enrollments

Across-the-board rate reductions: 1.6% effective 10/1, 2% effective 7/1

# Key Budget Successes

2% across-the-board rate reduction in '26-27 smaller than feared

Neuropsychological testing codes protected from dramatic cuts

No new waiting lists – growth in SLS, CES, and CHRP waivers fully funded

Funded 372 DD waiver reserve capacity/emergency enrollments for FY26-27

No elimination of service categories

Protected eligibility criteria

Early Intervention growth fully funded, with only one cost-containment measure enacted



# The 2026 Legislative Session: Key Legislation

- [HB26-1147](#): Host Home for People with IDD (Supported by Alliance & Passed)
  - Funds creation of a database with information about IRSS providers to be used by HCPF, CDPHE, and provider agencies that will help weed out bad providers and monitor “PASA-hopping”.
  - Clarifies that IRSS settings must be treated as residential properties in the application of local zoning, fire, and building codes, etc.
- [HB26-1235](#): Updates to Medicaid (Supported by Alliance & Passed)
  - Among updates to other areas of Medicaid, the bill requires HCBS providers to report their ratio of direct care service costs to administrative costs by September 30, 2027, and HCPF to report on the information collected to the General Assembly by December 31, 2027.
  - This one-time report will, hopefully, help legislators understand all that goes into delivering HCBS and prevent efforts by some to impose administrative caps on provider agencies.



# The 2026 Legislative Session: Key Legislation

- [HB26-1425](#): Applied Behavior Analysis Services (Passed)
  - Adds licensure for behavior analysts and assistant behavior analysts
  - Allows temp. ABA reimbursement for behavior technicians pursuing certification
  - Requires licensure of ABA clinics by August 1, 2027
- [SB26-187](#): Establishing Commission on Medicaid (Passed)



# Key (non-budget-related) Rules

- Provider Accountability Rule
  - Prohibits provider agencies from engaging in certain solicitation, misrepresentation of services or benefits, inducement to select a particular provider, and inappropriate coaching to exaggerate needs. Agencies cannot condition provision of services on receipt of any other service from the agency.
  - Providers may assist Members in accurately describing needs, provide factual information, and participate in care coordination.
- Medication Administration in the DD waiver
  - Clarifies and expands who may administer auto-injectable medications in HCBS-DD residential habilitation settings.
- Supported Employment Restructure
  - Establishes an outcome-based payment methodology for Job Development and Job Coaching services.
- Visit [Alliance's Rulemaking Tracker](#) to see all the rules we've reviewed this year



# **Politics, Policy, & What Comes Next**

**Emma Hudson, Carrick Strategies**



# Top Lines from the 2026 Legislative Session

- 120 Days of Fun
- Last year of Polis Admin
- 714 Bills introduced
- Sampling of Hot Button Issues:
  - Tech privacy & AI regulation
  - Healthcare & Medicaid
  - Immigration & Federal Context
  - Business regulatory reforms (enviro & labor)



# Colorado Medicaid Commission

## Background

- JBC set aside \$500,000 to establish a working group
- JBC sponsored SB26-187
- As of 9/1/2026, the commission has met 6 times.

**WHO?**

**10 Legislators**

**WHAT?**

**“Investigate Medicaid”**

**WHEN?**

**Twice a Month**



# What the Commission Has Covered

**June 4, June 17, &  
July 6**

Medicaid 101 &  
Organization

**July 28**

Medicaid 101 (cont.) &  
H.R.1

**August 5**

What do Members Know?

**August 27**

Eligibility, Enrollment, &  
Benefits



# Upcoming Commission Meetings

**September 2**

Delivery & payment:  
capitation, PRIME &  
rates

**September 17**

Financing: what's  
really on the table &  
LTSS

**October 7**

Behavioral Health;  
Public & stakeholder  
input

**October**

From findings to  
options

**November**

Develop final  
recommendations;  
draft report

**December**

Adopt report



# Election Outlook & Key Races

- Primary results – the Blue Wave
  - Gubernatorial Dem & GOP primaries
  - Incumbents beat by a more progressive candidate
- Heading into the General this November
  - 5 key races (3 in the House & 2 in the Senate)
    - Democratic Supermajority?
  - Controversial ballot initiatives
    - BUDGET IMPACTS: graduated income tax, Prop NN (education measure), Roads (removed)
    - ALSO: fentanyl crimes, LGBTQ+ attacks, immigration, taxes, and more



# Looking Ahead & Setting the Stage

- ~30 new Legislators
- The JBC Shuffle
  - Plus general committee switch-ups, particularly HHS
- New Dem Leadership in both the House and Senate
- New Administration
- Hot-Button Issues
  - Health Insurance Reform
  - Data Centers
  - Flock/general privacy & surveillance
  - HR 1 Implementation
- Another difficult budget year



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