

COLORADO BALLOT GUIDE

2026



UNITED WAY
Larimer County

2026 Colorado Ballot Guide

United Way of Larimer County mobilizes the caring power of community to support the success of all children and youth in Larimer County. That's why we invest in programs and policies that build **family financial stability**, promote **kindergarten readiness**, advance **reading at grade level**, and support **high school graduation**. By focusing on these four building blocks and expanding access to opportunity, we're working to ensure that each and every child, regardless of identity or background, has the foundation they need for lifelong success.

In alignment with our mission, United Way of Larimer County recommends the following positions on key Colorado ballot measures impacting children, youth, and their families this November:

Amendment 87: Support

Mission Connection: Family Financial Stability, Kindergarten Readiness, Reading at Grade Level and High School Graduation

What It Does: Currently, everyone in Colorado pays the same state income tax rate of 4.4%, no matter how much they earn. Amendment 87 would change that. People with lower incomes would pay a lower rate, while people who make \$500,000 or more would pay a higher rate.

The measure is expected to raise about **\$2.7 billion each year for child care, education, and healthcare** across Colorado.

Learn more about Amendment 87 [here](#) and explore how it could affect your household using the [graduated income tax calculator](#).

Why We Support It: Amendment 87 would **lower income taxes for an estimated 97% of Colorado taxpayers** while raising \$2.7 billion each year for child care, healthcare, and education. These investments would help families become more financially stable and give children a stronger foundation to thrive.

What the Data Tells Us:

- [ALICE data](#) shows that **nearly half of all children across the state live in households facing economic hardship.**
- Financial stability helps children thrive. Household income, neighborhood conditions, and financial stress are among the [strongest environmental influences](#) on children's development.
- **Colorado faced \$2.5 billion in budget [shortfalls](#) over the past two years.**
- Inflation, the expiration of pandemic relief, federal cuts from H.R. 1, and TABOR restrictions have contributed to [budget pressures](#) and cuts or freezes to essential programs that families rely on including Medicaid and childcare assistance through the state.
- **The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) waitlist has grown from just four families in 2023 to [more than 14,000](#) in 2026.** Larimer County is one of 28 counties where CCCAP enrollment is currently frozen and has been since 2024.
- **Medicaid cuts put coverage at risk for Colorado children and families.** Medicaid provides health coverage to roughly 1.2 million Coloradans, including children and low-income families. [40% of Colorado children](#) are covered by Medicaid and nearly half of all births.

Proposition 136: Oppose

Mission Connection: Family Financial Stability

What It Does: Proposition 136 would cap income tax rates at their current level of 4.4%.

Learn more about Proposition 136 [here](#).

Why We Oppose It: Proposition 136 would directly **block the benefits of Amendment 87**, including the \$2.7 billion investment in child care, education, and healthcare services statewide.

Proposition NN: Support

Mission Connection: Kindergarten Readiness, Reading at Grade Level, High School Graduation

What It Does: Proposition NN would allow the state to keep additional tax revenue it has already collected under TABOR and use it for education. It would **increase funding for K–12 public schools** by up to 2% each year for 10 years. The money would first support teacher pay and retention, smaller class sizes, and career and technical education, followed by other school services. At least half of the funding would go to K–12 schools, with the rest supporting early childhood education and full-day preschool.

Learn more about Proposition NN [here](#).

Why We Support It: Proposition NN will help schools **retain qualified teachers and give students more individualized attention**, supporting reading and graduation outcomes. NN will also fund early learning, so more children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

What the Data Tells Us:

- Colorado schools are catching up from years of underfunding. **Schools have lost an estimated [\\$10 billion](#) over the last 14 years** due to recession and the Budget Stabilization Factor.
- Schools are struggling to keep pace with inflation and the rising costs of education. One study found that **Colorado is behind between [\\$4,000 - \\$4,500 in per pupil spending](#) and that the state would need to spend an additional \$4.1 billion to fully fund schools.**
- [Two studies](#) commissioned by the Colorado Legislature found that students are consistently falling below the state educational standards and do not reach standards for college and career readiness.
- [Research](#) links **increased school funding to higher reading and math scores and graduation rates**, particularly when investments support [teacher retention](#), smaller class sizes, and student services.
- While all students benefit from smaller classes, research shows the greatest benefits for low-income students and students of color. One [study](#) found that reducing class sizes could reduce the racial achievement gap by one-third.

Amendment 81: Oppose 

Mission Connection: Family Financial Stability, High School Graduation

What It Does: Amendment 81 would change the Colorado Constitution by creating a new, mandatory connection between law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement. If passed, **all Colorado law enforcement would be required to notify federal immigration authorities** in specified circumstances.

Learn more about Amendment 81 [here](#).

Why We Oppose It: Immigrant youth and youth in mixed-status families, where household members have different immigration statuses, already face gaps in educational and economic opportunities and outcomes. Amendment 81 would further deepen those gaps.

What the Data Tells Us:

Family Financial Stability

- In Colorado, [65% of Hispanic children](#) already live in households struggling to afford basic needs, nearly twice the rate of white children.
- Financial hardship is even more common for Colorado children born outside the U.S. ([nearly 60%](#)) and children living in limited English-speaking households ([83%](#)).
- When a caregiver is detained or deported, their family suffers a [40-90% loss of income](#) putting all family members at risk of instability.
- Partnerships between ICE and local law enforcement negatively affect housing stability. [Foreclosure rates rise](#) among Hispanic households in communities with increased ICE cooperation.

High School Graduation

- In 2025, Hispanic/Latino students reported higher rates of absenteeism than their peers in other racial groups according to the 2025 [Healthy Kids Colorado Survey](#).
- Communities adopting local law-enforcement partnerships with ICE experienced a [7.3% decline](#) in Hispanic public-school enrollment, including a 9.4% decline at the elementary-school level.
- Disruptions in school attendance [negatively affect](#) educational achievement

Proposition 134: Oppose ❌

Mission Connection: High School Graduation

What It Does: Proposition 134 would restrict participation in school sports as early as kindergarten based on sex assigned at birth. **This measure would override current school district policy in Larimer County** and require school personnel to enforce the change, including potential practices such as vetting students based on appearance and requesting proof of a student's sex assigned at birth.

Learn more about Proposition 134 [here](#).

Why We Oppose It: Students experiencing a sense of belonging in school is a key component of high school graduation and long-term success. Restricting opportunities for transgender students to participate in their school communities makes schools less inclusive and supportive for young people already facing significant barriers to educational and economic success.

What the Data Tells Us:

- **Less than half of transgender students in Larimer County report feeling that they belong at school**, compared with 80.9% of their cisgender peers—a 34.2 percentage-point gap according to 2025 [Healthy Kids Colorado Survey](#).
- [Data](#) shows that **participating in school sports can strengthen students' sense of belonging and well-being**.
- [Research](#) has found that academic performance and a sense of belonging at school reinforce each other. Students who feel like they belong tend to get better grades. Better grades support students feeling like they belong.
- Youth who feel like they belong are more likely attend school, involve themselves in activities, and [continue to graduation](#).
- Policies that exclude LGBTQ+ students can have broader effects on well-being and school climate. LGBTQ+ **students attending schools with at least one anti-LGBTQ+ policy** [reported](#) higher rates of harassment, bullying, anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts than students in schools without those policies.
- In alignment with Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA) guidelines, Poudre and Thompson school districts currently allow transgender and gender-nonconforming students to participate in school sports consistent

with their gender identity. If enacted, Proposition 134 would require those districts to change their policies.

Proposition 135: Oppose ❌

Mission Connection: High School Graduation

What It Does: Proposition 135 restricts healthcare access for transgender youth by prohibiting medical professionals from providing surgeries that alter a minor's biological sex characteristics and prevents public and private insurance carriers for paying for these procedures.

Learn more about Proposition 135 [here](#).

Why We Oppose It: Transgender youth are already more likely to face mental health challenges and greater barriers to educational and economic success. Proposition 135 would make existing challenges worse by limiting access to care that can support these students' mental health and success in school and beyond.

What the Data Tells Us:

- In 2025, transgender students were [more than three times as likely](#) as their cisgender peers to report seriously considering suicide in the past year.
- Transgender students were also [more than twice as likely](#) as cisgender peers to report feeling so sad and hopeless it interrupted their normal activities.
- Poor mental health negatively affects concentration and mental ability for students. Both depression and anxiety are [associated](#) with lower grades and poorer performance at school.
- [Research](#) has found that transgender and nonbinary youth who received gender-affirming medical care had substantially lower odds of depression and suicidality.
- [Gender-affirming surgery for minors is very rare](#) and already [has many safeguards in place](#).
- Banning certain types of care could also affect other treatments that aren't directly banned. In response to federal pressure, [Children's Hospital Colorado](#) paused all gender-affirming medical care for patients under 18 in 2025, despite never providing gender-affirming surgery to minors.

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