



HEALTHIER™  
COLORADO

# Growing Seeds of Change

Partnerships in Local Advocacy (PiLA)



# A note from the CEO



We created Partnerships in Local Advocacy (PiLA) to seize what we think was a largely untapped opportunity to empower people like you to positively impact their local communities. 🗣️ – Jake Williams

# Dear reader,

Your health isn't just the product of personal decisions, or solely about what happens in the doctor's office. Public policy directly influences the choices and resources that are available to each of us. Oftentimes, that policy is being written right in your backyard.

Each morning, when you turn the faucet on for water, or take a breath, or send your kid to school, or hear the sirens of an ambulance, or figure how to afford and get to your next destination, your wellbeing is being directly impacted by the decisions of local government. The deliberations of city councils, county commissions, local boards of public health, school boards and special districts are all consequential to your health and are often the most accessible political bodies for regular Coloradans like you. Afterall, they are your neighbors.

But you probably don't hear too much about those bodies, at least in comparison to what you hear about at the State Capitol or in Washington, D.C. We created Partnerships in Local Advocacy (PiLA) to seize what we think was a largely untapped opportunity to empower people like you to positively impact their local communities. PiLA provides resources to regular Coloradans to run local policy change campaigns that advance community wellbeing. We've already fueled dozens of victories, and we hope we can partner with you to win for health in your community.

Sincerely,



**Jake Williams**  
CEO, Healthier Colorado



# Who is Healthier Colorado?

Healthier Colorado is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to raising the voices of Coloradans in the public policy process to improve the health of our state's residents. We believe that every Coloradan should have a fair chance at living a healthy life. The people of Colorado are our constituency, and Healthier Colorado aims to make meaningful improvements throughout our state's diverse communities. Our intent is to do more than educate and advocate — we want to drive action, real change, and impact.



**Local voters could hold key in Colorado's mental health crisis.**

– The Gazette, 1/18/21

# Our Focus Areas

We believe that every Coloradan should have the opportunity to live a healthy life, regardless of race, income, geography, disability status, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Health is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being of people. We focus on these components in our work across the state. These are the three interconnected areas in which we seek to improve the health and wellbeing of all Coloradans.



## Physical Health

Physical health is the wellbeing of an individual's body. This looks different for every Coloradan, and the ideal physical health for one person may not be the same for another. To maintain physical health, we seek to ensure that everybody has access to quality, affordable health care, as well the other resources required for physical health, including access to nutritious food, oral health services, and safe spaces for physical activity.



## Mental Health

Mental health is the condition of someone's psychological or emotional wellbeing. An essential part of living a healthy life, mental health affects how we think, feel and act. To positively advance mental health, we seek to ensure that everybody has access to quality, affordable mental health services, such as counseling and treatment for addiction. We also seek to create environments in communities, including in schools, that support mental health.



## Social Health

Social health refers to the ability of everybody in a community having an equal opportunity to attain wellbeing. Factors including racism, income, geography, disability, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation can be barriers to this opportunity. These factors can block access to essential elements of health and wellbeing, including safe and affordable housing, a quality education, legal justice, and access to health care. We seek to break down these barriers in order to give everybody a chance at living a healthy life.



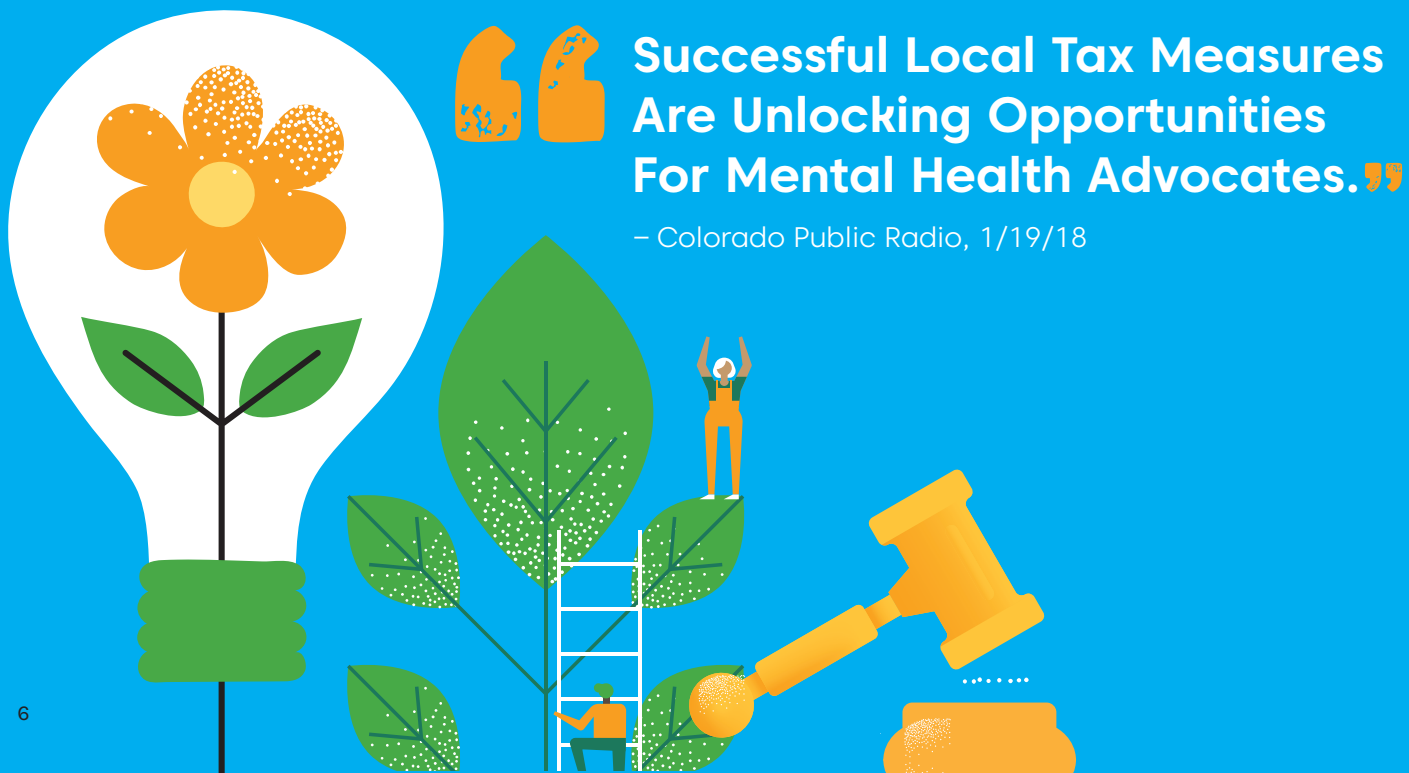
# What is PiLA?

While you will often see Healthier Colorado advocating at the state capitol seeking broad policy change, we also value the power behind community-based solutions. PiLA is our commitment to local communities. **We believe in the power of local solutions and community to solve local problems.** And, to us, this means supporting policy changes that come from the communities themselves. These policy changes typically take the form of ballot measure campaigns, but we are happy to help move policies forward through a legislative body such as your city council, school board, county commission, etc.. We acknowledge that there's often a resource gap between a good idea and winning a campaign, and this is where Healthier Colorado can help.

## How to get support

Our process is simple and it starts with just a conversation. We want to know what health hurdles communities are facing and how we can best support the policy solutions to overcome them. In this initial phase, we ask a lot of questions and we do a lot of listening.

We have worked with county commissioners, city council members, community groups, advocacy organizations, and with special districts like Health Service Districts, Ambulance Districts, and Parks and Recreation. We are open to any entity that has policy ideas with viable paths forward and understand the importance of community outreach.





# Case Study #1

## Bring Health Care Back to South Park

You might hear “South Park” and think of the irreverent animated series created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone. While the show certainly put a “South Park” on the map, it didn’t reveal what was really happening in the area around Fairplay in Park County, Colorado. In 2017, the residents were in crisis. The area’s only general practice doctor was retiring. This meant that the 16,000 residents had to travel to receive any kind of primary care. And, as Coloradans, we know that especially in the winter months over mountain passes, this can be more than just an inconvenience. This lack of access meant that people were forgoing the treatment or preventative services they needed, because it just wasn’t feasible.

Luckily, the community had advocates dedicated to finding a way to provide care. The solution they sought was to establish a Health Service District that could collect and spend revenue. That way, when a health care provider did come in, there would be infrastructure in place to provide care. By the time we were introduced to the campaign, the service plan for the Health Service District had been approved by the Park County Board of County Commissioners.

For Healthier Colorado, our involvement started with a simple email introduction from an organizational partner who thought we would be able to help. We were introduced to the campaign team in mid-September and this was a November ballot question, so we quickly hit the ground running. We helped review the campaign’s talking points and materials to provide feedback on what the measure meant to

the average voter, not someone who was so wrapped up in all the intricate details. We collaborated with the South Park team to design and distribute direct mail to voters. We helped create Facebook ads and graphics that were eye-catching and compelling for community members to share on their own pages. We helped convey and amplify the message that advocates had been saying for years.



And on Election Day, all the hard work paid off and the campaign was victorious. This was a huge win in terms of both what it means for residents of South Park and passing a tax increase in an historically tax-adverse community.



## Ballot Question

**5A**

**Shall the South Park Health Service District be Organized?**

**YES: 1,307**

**NO: 485**

**5B**

**Shall South Park Health Service District Taxes Be**

**Increased \$500,000** In fiscal year 2018 (first full fiscal year dollar increase) and by whatever additional amounts are raised annually thereafter, by levying a one percent (1 penny per dollar) sales tax upon every transaction or other incident with respect to which a sales tax is levied by the state of Colorado (excluding purchases of food for domestic home consumption, prescription medications, residential utility bills, or other exempt transactions as detailed in articles 26 and 30, title 39, as amended, of the Colorado revised statutes), commencing on or after January 1, 2018, for the purpose of defraying a portion of the district's cost of operations, maintenance, and administration expenses, and shall the proceeds of such sales tax and any investments thereon be collected, retained and spent by the district without limitation by the revenue and spending limits of Article X, Section 20 of the Colorado constitution?

**YES: 1,212**

**NO: 622**

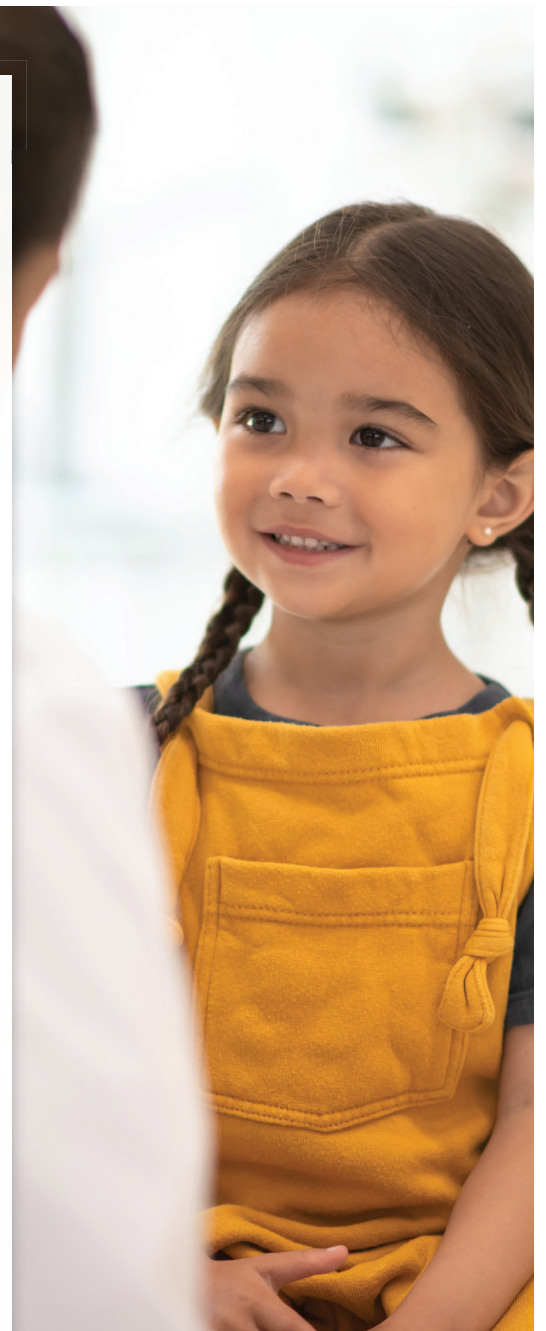
**5C**

**Shall South Park Health Service District be Authorized**

**To Collect,** retain, and spend the full amount of all revenues received by the district, including without limitation all taxes, service charges, administrative charges, grants or any other fee, rate or charge authorized by law or contract to be imposed, collected or received by the district during 2018 and each fiscal year thereafter, such amounts to constitute a voter approved revenue change and be collected, retained and spent by the district without regard to any spending, revenue raising, or other limitation contained in Article X, Section 20 of the Colorado constitution, or any other law which purports to limit the district's revenues or expenditures as it currently exists or as it may be amended in the future, and without limiting in any year the amount of other revenues that may be collected, retained and spent by the district?

**YES: 1,171**

**NO: 664**



Check out this note from clinic staff in South Park. It's always fantastic to see their hard work in action and that the campaign paid off.



Things are going great at the clinic – almost too great – it's very busy!! They are open 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday and have on-call service. They currently have a part time MD and a full time nurse practitioner. I will be forever grateful for what you and Healthier Colorado did for our community.

Thanks, Barbie

PS: I remember you guys had a hand in the South Park Ambulance District Paramedic at Home Program and that is lifting off the ground now too!!! WOOT WOOT 🗨️

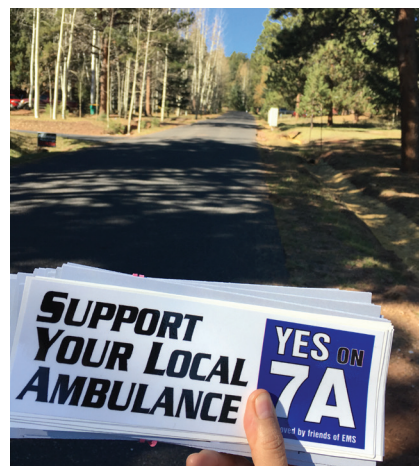
# Case Study #2

## Friends of EMS

Knocking doors in Woodland Park in 2018 to support the EMS services, is one Healthier Colorado staff will cherish forever. It was a beautiful fall day (with many wildlife sightings!) and we were canvassing side-by-side with EMTs who were fighting to pass a sales tax increase to fund an additional ambulance and to expand services for community members. They had gone to the ballot and lost in 2015, so the stakes were high.

Ute Pass Ambulance District had no available ambulance for an average of 8 hours a day. And, for a district that overlaps four counties and covers 539 square miles, that could be the difference between life and death. In 2018, response times were worsening because there were not enough resources — due to limited reimbursement from Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers— to fully run a third ambulance. And, this was no rookie crew. Many of their EMTs had been recognized statewide for their work from the American Ambulance Association, the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, and the Emergency Medical Association of Colorado.

When we were introduced to the Ute Pass team by some of our South Park, we were eager to help support this critical service. It was August when we first connected and the election was in November, so we had some time to truly collaborate on the campaign before voters started paying attention (after Labor Day). Together, we put together a robust field campaign. Healthier Colorado paid for direct mail, supplied phone bank lists, canvass turfs, phone scripts, and the Ute Pass team provided the volunteers. And, they couldn't get enough! We contacted hundreds of voters at their doors and on the phones, something they didn't do in 2015 which proved to be



a game changer. This was a standout campaign in how dedicated the volunteers were.

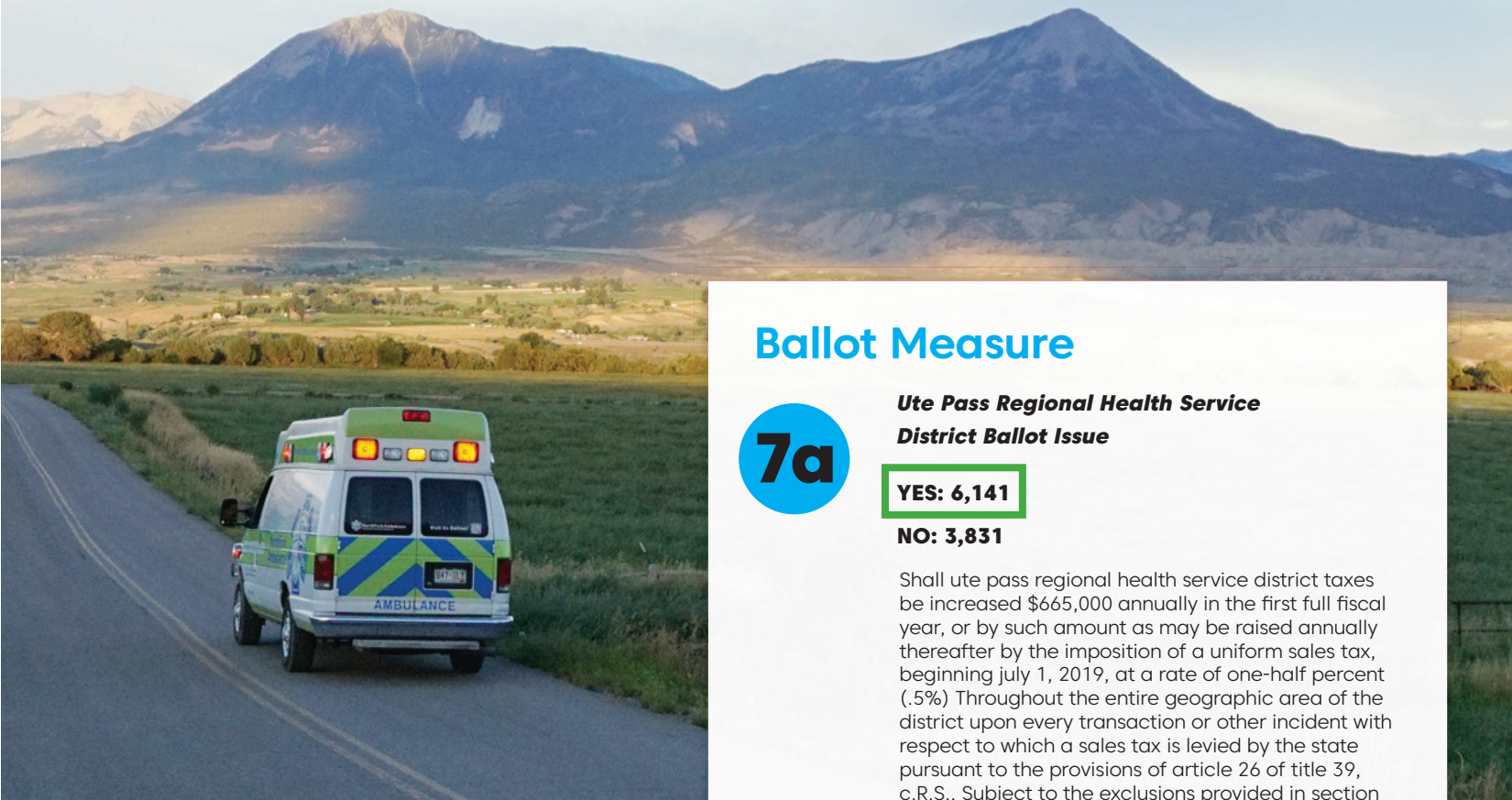


None of us want to envision a time when we would need to call an ambulance, but we take comfort in knowing that if we need one, it'll show up. This is a critical service that we easily take for granted and don't understand its value until we are in need.



# One half-cent could make all the difference for Ute Pass ambulance district ”

– Pikes Peak Courier, 9/27/18



## Ballot Measure

**7a**

**Ute Pass Regional Health Service  
District Ballot Issue**

**YES: 6,141**

**NO: 3,831**

Shall ute pass regional health service district taxes be increased \$665,000 annually in the first full fiscal year, or by such amount as may be raised annually thereafter by the imposition of a uniform sales tax, beginning July 1, 2019, at a rate of one-half percent (.5%) Throughout the entire geographic area of the district upon every transaction or other incident with respect to which a sales tax is levied by the state pursuant to the provisions of article 26 of title 39, c.R.S., Subject to the exclusions provided in section 32-1-1003(5), c.R.S., Such sales tax to be levied and collected as provided in section 32-19-112, c.R.S.; And shall all district revenues be collected, retained and spent notwithstanding any revenue limits provided by law to fund, sustain and improve ambulance services, including improving ambulance services, reducing response times, funding the district resident insurance only billing program, additional paramedics and ambulances, purchasing medical equipment and supplies, and funding future facility and other capital improvement projects?

**HOSPITAL**



# PiLA Campaigns Over the Years

Year	Healthier Colorado Support	Campaign Name	Jurisdiction
2016		Healthy Boulder Kids	City of Boulder
2016		People for a Healthier Larimer County	Larimer County
2017		Healthy Kids, Healthy Durango	City of Durango
2017		Friends of D11	El Paso County
2017		Vote Yes for Mental Health	Eagle County
2017		Our Denver 2017	City and County of Denver
2017		Bring Healthcare back to South Park	Portion of Park County
2017		Yes on Aspen Ballot Issue 2B	City of Aspen
2018		Yes on Basalt Ballot Question A	City of Basalt
2018		Friends of South Park Ambulance	Portion of Park County
2018		Friends of Emergency Medical Services	Portions of Teller, El Paso, Douglas, & Jefferson Counties
2018		Friends of North Fork Ambulance	Portions of Delta, Montrose, and Gunnison Counties
2018		Yes on 1A: Mental Health Matters	San Miguel County
2018		n/a	City of Avon
2018		Healthy Kids, Healthy Boulder	City of Boulder
2018		Healthy Food for Denver	City and County of Denver
2018		Citizens Protecting People, Property, and Open Space	Portions of Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties
2018		Caring 4 Denver	City and County of Denver
2018		Healthy Parks & Rivers for Everyone	City and County of Denver
2018		1A is Summit's Future	Summit County
2019		Citizens for Morgan County Recreation	Morgan County
2019		1A for Summit Youth	Summit County
2019		Healthy Eagle County	Eagle County
2019		n/a	City of Meeker
2019		Yes on 2A	City and County of Denver
2020		n/a	City of Rangely
2020		Carbondale tobacco increase Issue A	City of Carbondale
2020		Denver Makes a Difference	City and County of Denver
2020		Climate Action Now	City and County of Denver
2020		Gilpin parks and rec measure	Gilpin County
2021		Friends of Moffat County HSD	Moffat County
2021		Leadville Housing - Yes on 2A	City of Leadville
2021		Keep Denver Housed	City and County of Denver
2021		Keep Denver Strong	City and County of Denver



### Healthier Colorado Position

### Win or Loss

To support an excise tax of 2 cents/fluid oz on sugar-sweetened beverages to fund healthy food access and equity programs	W
To support a .25% sales tax increase to fund a new mental health treatment center to serve the county's residents	L
To defeat a prohibition of the practice of adding fluoride to the community's drinking water	W
To support a mill levy increase to fund mental health professionals in this El Paso Co. school district	W
To support a sales tax increase on recreational marijuana to fund mental/behavioral health services and substance use treatment	W
To support the bond measure that would fund \$937 million in critical infrastructure needs like parks and recreation centers and a new outpatient facility at Denver Health	W
To support the funding and creation of a Health Service District	W
To support a sales tax increase on cigarettes and other tobacco products	W
To support a sales tax increase on cigarettes and other tobacco products	W
To support a mill levy increase to fund additional services and equipment	W
To support a .5% sales tax increase to continue 24/7 services and a third ambulance	W
To support the creation and funding of Health Service District to operate emergency medical services (EMS)	W
To support a mill levy increase to fund community based mental/behavioral health, substance use treatment, and suicide prevention	W
To support a sales tax increase on cigarettes and other tobacco products	W
To support the City of Boulder retaining funds from the 2016 sugar-sweetened beverage tax	W
To support a .08% sales tax increase to provide healthy food for Denvers' kids	W
To support a mill levy increase to fund flood mitigation and open space in the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District	W
To support a .25% sales tax increase to fund mental/behavioral health services, substance use treatment, and alternatives to jail	W
To support a .25% sales tax increase to fund parks, open space, trails, and waterways	W
To support a mill levy increase to fund critical services including early childhood care, behavioral health programs, and fire mitigation	W
To support a .75% sales tax increase to create and fund a countywide Parks and Recreation District	L
To support a sales tax increase on cigarettes and other tobacco products	W
To support a sales tax increase on cigarettes and other tobacco products	W
To support the continuation of community water fluoridation	W
To support the creation of a new Department of Transportation and Infrastructure	W
To support the continuation of community water fluoridation	W
To support a sales tax increase on cigarettes and other tobacco products	W
To support a .25% sales tax increase to fund housing, shelter, and services for people experiencing homelessness	W
To support a .25% sales tax increase to fund programs to eliminate greenhouse gas emission and air pollution.	W
To support a mill levy increase to fund the countywide Parks and Recreation District	W
To support the funding and creation of a Health Service District to operate emergency medical services (EMS)	L
To support an increase in lodging tax to fund affordable housing	W
To defeat the repeal of the Group Living Ordinance	W
To defeat the decrease in sales tax rate	W

# PiLA Going Forward

We recognize that while every community in Colorado is unique, we share some common barriers to health as a state. What will differ across our state are the solutions to help overcome those hurdles.

- **Colorado is experiencing increasingly severe and frequent wildfires.**

**The problem:** 2020 was the worst wildfire season in Colorado's history. Over 1,000 wildfires, including the 3 largest ever, burned more than 665,000 acres and cost more than \$200 million in suppression costs. Even worse, roughly 660,000 Coloradans live in the highest wildfire risk areas and more are moving into high danger areas everyday. Proactive and strategic wildfire mitigation and forest management can prevent costly and consequential fire damage to homes, habitats, critical infrastructure, and more. It's estimated that every \$1 spent on mitigation work can save \$5 in reduced or eliminated post-fire damage. In the absence of adequate state and federal funding for mitigation, it may be wise to consider local dedicated resources for these critical services.

**Chaffee County's solution:** In 2018, voters in Chaffee County approved a .25% sales tax increase to improve forest health, reduce wildfire danger, and help manage the impacts of fast-paced outdoor recreation growth. To oversee the funds, the county established the Common Ground Fund led by a citizen advisory committee that is dedicated to leveraging those funds to the highest extent possible. In 2020, investments of nearly \$900 thousand over 2 years for wildfire mitigation and forest health were leveraged with \$736 thousand in matching dollars from state, federal, and private sources. In addition to leveraging matching funds, the demonstration of committing to community-driven solutions and resources to forest health, has built new partnerships and funding opportunities.

- **Across the state, from Denver to Durango, Coloradans are experiencing soaring housing costs.**

**The problem:** Over the last ten years, Colorado has witnessed a 40% decrease in homes built that has coincided with a population increase of almost 15%. The same 10-year period has seen the state lose 300,000 'naturally occurring affordable homes, which is more than 10% of the state's stock of homes. Due to that crunch, it's estimated that in 2019, an estimated 315,000 Colorado households pay over 50% of their income towards housing, while homelessness and housing insecurity continues to rise.

**Leadville's solution:** In 2021, voters in the City of Leadville overwhelmingly approved a .3% increase in the lodging tax, paid by visitors, to establish an affordable housing fund. The revenue collected will go toward ensuring that the workforce that serves the city and its tourists can afford to live there. This measure was one of nearly a dozen across the state that aimed to address the housing shortage.





- **Colorado is in dire need of mental health and substance use treatment and prevention services.**

**The problem:** The 2022 State of Mental Health in America report ranked Colorado last place overall for adult mental health which accounts for factors like prevalence of mental illness and access to care. 2021 witnessed the highest ever number of overdose deaths in Colorado, with a 50% increase between 2019-2021 alone. Suicide is the leading cause of death for Colorado children between the ages of 10-24.

**San Miguel County’s solution:** In 2018, voters in San Miguel had the opportunity to support a local solution — a .75 mill levy increase to help fund mental health resources for schools, crisis and emergency response services, suicide prevention, and mental health treatment and substance abuse prevention throughout the county. A portion of funding would also go towards providing consistent psychological counseling in the school districts. The measure passed and the county has appointed members of the community to the San Miguel Behavioral Health Solutions Panel which has granted funding to both school districts in the county, the Sheriff’s department, and direct service providers to ensure the mental and behavioral health needs of all the county’s residents are met.

<sup>1</sup> [https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/affordable\\_housing\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/affordable_housing_report_final.pdf)  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.denverpost.com/2022/01/31/housing-costs-affordable-colorado-stimulus/>  
<sup>3</sup> <https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2022%20State%20of%20Mental%20Health%20in%20America.pdf>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://kdvr.com/news/data/colorado-on-track-to-exceed-1800-overdose-deaths-in-2021/>

“ Marshall firestorm shows Colorado suburbs now vulnerable as climate warms, “hardening” needed, experts say

– The Denver Post, 1/11/22



# Have a campaign and need some help?

Contact Partnerships in Local Advocacy (PiLA) simply by emailing [info@healthiercolorado.org](mailto:info@healthiercolorado.org) with the subject line "PiLA request"

And, for more information visit [HealthierColorado.org/pila](http://HealthierColorado.org/pila)



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