



# Legislative Report



[www.mikeweissman.com](http://www.mikeweissman.com)

Hi, I'm Mike Weissman and I've been a resident of North Aurora for more than 17 years. It's been the honor of my life to have served as our Colorado State Representative for House District 36 since 2017. I am running to represent Senate District 28 to continue my commitment to economic justice, housing justice, combating climate change and pollution, strengthening consumer protection laws, reforming our criminal justice system, and working toward a Colorado where opportunity is broadly shared. Opportunity is not an accident. Rather it's a result of choices that our government makes. In this newsletter you can read about issues I have worked on to expand opportunity during my service as a state representative. For more details, please visit my web site at [mikeweissman.com](http://mikeweissman.com), and you can see more information about any of the bills discussed here at [leg.colorado.gov](http://leg.colorado.gov). *Mike*

**For more information and my town hall meeting schedule please visit:**  
[www.mikeweissman.com](http://www.mikeweissman.com)

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

*Colorado is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis - in Aurora, prices have doubled or tripled in some areas within the last ten years. It is increasingly hard for people to find housing - whether to own or to rent - and to stay in housing they already have. Our state has a responsibility to do more to address this problem.*

### **Increased Funding for Affordable Housing (HB19-1245)**

– Until a few years ago, Colorado was one of only a few states without a dedicated source of funding for affordable housing efforts. I sponsored this bill to create sustainable funding for housing efforts without raising taxes. **By closing a loophole in our tax code, this bill will invest \$45-50 million per year for construction of new housing units and to support other housing efforts.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

### **Saving Renters Money on Background Check Fees (HB23-1099)**

– Many renters have experienced firsthand how quickly fees can add up when applying to many different apartments. I sponsored this bill to allow renters to reuse a rental application for up to 30 days without paying additional fees. Reusability could save renters hundreds of dollars in the course of an apartment search - money that can go to cover costs of food, rent, healthcare, or other expenses. *STATUS: signed into law.*

### **Improving Colorado's "Warranty of Habitability" (HB19-1170)**

– If you are paying rent, you deserve a home that is safe and livable with basics like functioning heat and plumbing. No one should have to move to escape an unsafe apartment, and in our tight rental market, it's hard to find an available unit anyway. I sponsored this bill to improve tenants' rights, limit landlord retaliation, and allow tenants to initiate repairs if landlords are not addressing problems. *STATUS: signed into law.*

### **Prohibiting Conflicted Metro District Debt (HB23-1090)**

– Almost all new housing in Colorado is built under a "metro district", which is a kind of special district with taxing authority that is able to issue debt to be paid by homeowners by way of property taxes. I sponsored this bill to prevent those in charge of issuing debt (developers) to be able to purchase that same debt and benefit

from interest payments that are paid off by homeowners, because this seems like a potential conflict of interest. *STATUS: defeated due to lobbying by the metro district industry.*

### **Continue HOA Information Office (HB20-1200)**

– Millions of Coloradans including many in Aurora and Adams and Arapahoe Counties live in HOAs. Sometimes questions arise concerning homeowners' rights in matters of covenants, fines and disputes. I sponsored this bill to extend by 5 years the HOA Information Office as a hub for HOA residents to seek information and lodge complaints if necessary. *STATUS: signed into law.*

### **2023 & 2024 Property Tax Reduction (SB22-238)**

– Property taxes fund our schools, counties and services like firefighting and libraries. But when property values increase sharply in a short amount of time, property taxes go up quickly too, and that is hard for household budgets. I sponsored this bill to reduce the property taxes Colorado residents and businesses will pay in 2023 and 2024, saving the average homeowner hundreds of dollars and keeping taxes from going up at all for some small businesses. *STATUS: signed into law.*

*AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONTINUED ON PAGE 2*

Let me know what you think!

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING, *continued*

**Consumer Protection & Oversight of Non-Bank Mortgage Servicers (HB21-1282)** – Non-bank companies service about 50% of all mortgages, but Colorado historically has not had consumer protection laws overseeing these companies. Failures in proper servicing can lead to payments not going to lenders on time, headaches for homeowners, and at worst, foreclosures. **I sponsored this bill to empower the Colorado Attorney General to oversee non-bank mortgage servicers and to assess fines on bad actors who harm homeowners.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

I've also supported housing legislation to: **strengthen renters' rights by prohibiting abusive practices in rental agreements** like fee-shifting to the renter, waiver of legal rights, or marked up costs (HB23-1095); **reduce evictions for renters on Social Security** (HB23-1120); **allow remote participation for eviction proceedings** (HB23-1186); **limit income and security deposit requirements to two times the monthly rent** (SB23-184); **improve water quality for mobile home community residents** (HB23-1257); commit over \$600M in grants, loans, incentives for lower-cost housing construction technologies, and more to create more affordable housing and to reduce homelessness (**8 separate bills in the 2022 legislative session**);

**commit over \$100M in funding to jumpstart additional affordable housing construction** (HB21-1329), with an emphasis on **supporting local governments** that adopt strategies for greater affordability (HB21-1271); **require greater disclosure of, and limitations, on, fees in rental agreements**, and allowing tenants more time to catch up on late payment of rent before eviction (SB21-173) and **limitations on and disclosure of rent increases** (HB21-1121); **strengthen rights of residents of mobile homes** by limiting security deposits and fees and requiring greater notice before tenancies may be terminated (HB20-1196); **allow mobile home park residents an option to purchase their park** from the seller to avoid losing their homes (HB20-1201); **increase privacy of eviction records** (HB20-1009); **prohibit discrimination in rental housing** based on source of lawful income (HB20-1332); **limit rental application fees** (HB19-1106); allow renters **more time to catch up on a late rental payment** in the case of an emergency (HB19-1118); increase housing tax credits to **incentivize construction of more housing units** (HB19-1228); **reduce double-taxation on mobile homes** (HB18-1315); and **make sure renters can get receipts for payments made** (SB18-010).

## HELPING COLORADANS KEEP UP WITH THE COST OF LIVING

*It has become more expensive to afford housing and healthcare and to just get by in Colorado and wages are not keeping up. In the last ten years, Aurora in particular has gone from a relatively affordable city to a place where rents have gone up very sharply.*

**Expanding Community Food Access (HB23-1008)** – One in three Coloradans are “food insecure”- lacking reliable access to nutritious food, and more than 60% of food retailers in Colorado that accept SNAP benefits are small, corner, or convenience stores. **I sponsored this bill to support small food retailers in covering 75% of the cost, via tax credits, of purchasing equipment needed to offer fresh foods in their neighborhoods.** Expanding stores' capacity to sell nutritious food will improve access and lower prices, while keeping more of the proceeds of economic activity in the local community instead of flowing to large out of state corporations. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Protecting Borrowers from High Interest Loans (HB23-1229)** – Since the voters approved an elimination of predatory payday loans in 2018, some Colorado lenders have replaced the practice with “alternative charge loans”, short-term loans capped at \$1,000 that avoid certain consumer protections. **I sponsored this bill to protect consumers by limiting fees on alternative charge loans and to increase repayment timelines in order to protect consumers from harmful debt cycles.** The bill also protects borrowers from facing high interest rates “exported” by out of state banks into Colorado, which increase the cost of borrowing. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Tax Justice: Closing Loopholes and Supporting Working People (HB21-1311 and HB21-1312)** – Almost all of us pay some amount of taxes, and taxes are how we fund things like K-12 education, firefighting, parks and open spaces, taking care of the disabled, and much more. But our tax laws have become riddled with special interest loopholes that take funding away from public services for the benefit of a small number of large corporations or wealthy individuals. **I sponsored these bills to close over \$100 million in tax loopholes and instead support working families and small local businesses with our tax laws, by**

**expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, funding the state Child Tax Credit for the first time ever, exempting small businesses from the business personal property tax, and promoting employee-owned businesses with targeted tax credits.** Together, these were some of the biggest tax reform bills Colorado has passed in over a decade. *STATUS: signed into law.*

In other sections of this legislative report you can read about bills I have sponsored and supported to reduce the costs of housing and healthcare, and to strengthen consumer protection laws to hold businesses that unfairly increase prices to account.



Mike and Sen. Rhonda Fields watch as Gov. Jared Polis signs their bill to expand access to healthy food.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION: HOLDING BIG CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE

*Shady business practices hurt consumers and also hurt honest businesses that treat people the right way. State laws should empower law enforcement as well as impacted individuals to seek redress against those who've done wrong through abusive business practices.*

### Protecting Coloradans from Medical Debt (SB23-093)

– Too many Coloradans struggle to pay medical bills and are frustrated with the lack of transparency when paying for medical services. **I sponsored this bill to strengthen our consumer protections related to medical debt and out-of-network billing.** This bill requires a health-care facility to provide an estimate of the total cost of a self-pay service, requires a debt collection agency collecting on a medical debt to provide to the consumer an itemized statement to dispute the validity of the debt, and caps debt interest at 3% per year. *STATUS: signed into law.*

### Antitrust & Price Gouging Enforcement (HB23-1192) –

Mergers and other anti-competitive conduct between large corporations can increase prices and decrease choices for consumers, but our state's anti-trust enforcement laws haven't been updated in decades. **I sponsored this bill to update the Colorado Antitrust Act so that the Colorado attorney general, the "people's lawyer," has the tools necessary to investigate and take action against anti-competitive business practices. This bill also enhances Colorado's disaster price gouging law** so that the attorney general and district attorneys can take action against businesses that unfairly try to profit off consumers following a declared disaster like a fire or flood. *STATUS: signed into law.*

### Prohibitions Against Price Gouging in Disaster Emergencies (HB20-1414) –

At the outset of COVID-19, Colorado

was one of only about 15 states with no specific prohibition against price gouging – charging unconscionable or abusive prices to rip off consumers. **I sponsored this bill to update the Colorado Consumer Protection Act to empower the attorney general and each district attorney to take action against sellers engaging in price gouging.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

### Consumer & Employee Dispute Resolution Fairness Act (SB20-093) –

Forced arbitration practices in consumer and employment contracts abridge people's rights. Instead of resolving a debate before a neutral judge, arbitration privatizes the justice system, lacks transparency, and lacks protections against conflicts of interest by arbitrators and companies that force arbitration on consumers. I sponsored this bill to require greater disclosures and transparency in arbitration and to provide remedies for non-compliance. *STATUS – postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19.*

### Strengthening the Colorado Consumer Protection Act (HB19-1289) –

Until recently, Colorado's consumer protection laws were rated among the weakest in the nation. **I sponsored this bill to strengthen protections for consumers harmed by irresponsible corporations by removing barriers to enforcement, updating penalty amounts for the first time in decades, and allowing action against reckless anti-consumer conduct.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

## PROTECTING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

*The Colorado Way of Life means enjoying equal rights regardless of your identity and being able to live your life free from government interference or identity-based harassment. We have long been a state where women's abortion rights are respected and I will always support keeping it this way, and we need to protect Coloradans from overreach from other states.*

### Protecting Opportunity & Workers' Rights (SB23-172) –

No Coloradan should face harassment or discrimination at the workplace, yet our state still lacks adequate policies to protect our workers and hold bad actors accountable due to outdated legal standards. **I sponsored this bill to update our bedrock Colorado civil rights law, the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act, to allow survivors of workplace discrimination and harassment to better pursue justice.** It also modernizes language around non-disclosure agreements, expands protections for people with disabilities, and adds marital status as a protected class. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Prosecuting Bias-motivated Crimes (SB21-280) –** Bias-motivated crimes don't just target one victim – they target an entire community of people of a certain race, ethnicity, orientation, religion, or other trait. But some offenders have been able to beat bias crime charges by arguing "mixed motives"



*Mike at an event celebrating the passage of his bill to strengthen Colorado's workplace non-discrimination laws.*

– they weren't attacking someone because of race, for example, they just wanted to steal that person's wallet. **I sponsored this bill to close this loophole so that perpetrators of bias crimes can be prosecuted where the crime motive was in whole or in part due to bias.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

I have also supported legislation to: **protect a**

**woman's right to decide whether to have an abortion or to continue a pregnancy free from government interference (HB22-1279); create abortion rights "shield laws" for women seeking abortions and those who assist them in exercising their rights, to protect from over-reaching out of state laws that seek to project anti-abortion rights policies into Colorado (SB23-188); protect access to abortion and preventative healthcare by requiring insurance companies to fully cover costs of these healthcare options (SB23-189); prevent deceptive**

## PROTECTING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS, *continued*

**marketing** by organizations that try to dissuade women from exercising their abortion rights and that do not actually offer abortion counseling or services (SB23-190); **ensure access to contraceptives** by requiring insurance carriers and pharmacy benefit managers to dispense 12-month prescriptions (SB23-284); **protect equal rights for people with disabilities** by ensuring access to the courts without lengthy administrative processes (HB23-1032); **allow all students to learn free from harassment and discrimination** by requiring schools to have modern policies for investigating allegations and to conduct regular trainings (SB23-

296); **promote equal employment opportunities** by prohibiting employers from requiring disclosure of age, birth date, or college graduation date in an initial job application (SB23-058 - signed into law); **update our employment discrimination laws** so people discriminated against on the job have better remedies (HB22-1367); **make it easier for same-sex couples to complete adoption procedures** so both parents can have full legal parental rights concerning their children (HB22-1153); and to **protect people from discrimination based on gender identity** (HB21-1108).

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM & PUBLIC SAFETY

*Public safety must be evidence-based, use tax dollars wisely, and support survivors of crime.*

*We should invest in efforts that reduce recidivism, thereby improving public safety and giving former offenders a chance to re-integrate into society.*

### Rights for Domestic Violence Survivors (HB23-1222)

– Municipal courts have jurisdiction over domestic violence cases in several of Colorado's largest cities, including Aurora, but these courts aren't required to have the same Victims Rights Act protections as state courts do. The result is that over 1 million Coloradans aren't guaranteed equivalent protections in domestic violence cases. **I sponsored this bill to require municipal courts to provide the same protections as state courts so all Coloradans can expect equal treatment for domestic violence cases** no matter what court handles the case. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Protecting Miranda Rights (HB23-1155)** – Miranda Rights are familiar to most Americans – these are the required reminders that you have the right to an attorney and that what you say in a police encounter can be used against you. **I sponsored this bill to create “Miranda” protections in state law, to protect Coloradans from any future weakening of their legal protections at the federal level.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Limiting “No-knock” Entries (SB23-254)** – “No-knock” entries into homes by law enforcement are unsafe for both the targeted individuals and law enforcement personnel. If they are to be used at all, they should only be used in situations in which the risk of harm by the no-knock is clearly outweighed by the risk of harm by the ongoing situation. **I sponsored this bill to create clear rules and stricter procedures when officers are performing search warrants, including a requirement that no-knock warrants only be issued when there is an imminent danger to the life of a person.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Increasing Funding To Support Survivors of Crimes (SB22-183)** – Historically Colorado and other states have received funding from the federal government to support a wide variety of services for crime survivors. However, due to federal law changes in recent years that the state had no control over, this funding has dropped significantly. **I sponsored this bill to commit \$41 million dollars of state funding to these services, with a specific emphasis on services for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.** *STATUS – signed into law.*

**Improving Screening & Services Brain Injury Survivors (SB22-057)** – Brain injuries are insufficiently understood but can have long-lasting impacts on those who suffer them, including survivors of violent crimes like assaults. I sponsored this bill to create a task force of experts that will bring recommendations

to the legislature on how to best create screening and treatment programs for people who experience a brain injury due to surviving a crime. *STATUS: signed into law.*

### Record Sealing & Collateral Consequences Reduction (HB21-1214)

– People who commit crimes should serve a sentence proportionate to their crime. Once they've served that sentence, it's in society's interest that they get a second chance, including stable housing and legal employment. But criminal justice records are widely available, making it hard for people to get their lives back on track. I sponsored this bill to give lower-level offenders a chance to go to court to seal their records. The court process includes input from crime victims and district attorneys, and a judge must find that sealing is warranted. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Funding for Justice Reinvestment (SB19-064)** – Since 2013, the “offender re-entry grant program” has been shown to reduce recidivism by up to 80% by more effectively supervising parolees. **I sponsored this bill to extend funding for this effective approach to public safety.** This bill also extends funding for pilot programs to fund crime victim support efforts and to make business loans and non-profit grants available in crime-impacted communities, including North Aurora, to increase economic opportunity and reduce crime. *STATUS: signed into law.*



*Mike and other legislators and advocates applaud the signing of their bill to increase protections for domestic violence survivors.*

## GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

*We can't talk about public safety without talking about gun safety. I will always think about my votes and my advocacy on gun violence prevention bills through the lens of the tragedy at the Century theater on July 20, 2012 and the many other senseless shootings that have harmed our community since then.*

**Strengthening "Red Flag" Laws for Gun Violence Prevention (SB23-170)** – Colorado's Extreme Risk Protection Order law has been a successful tool in preventing guns from ending up in the hands of people who pose a threat to themselves and others. **I sponsored this bill to allow more qualified individuals to file a petition for firearm removal as a tool to keep our communities safe from gun violence.** The bill expands the types of professionals who can file a petition to include licensed medical care and mental health providers, licensed educators, and district attorneys. *STATUS: signed into law.*

I've also supported gun violence prevention legislation to: **prohibit untraceable "ghost guns"** that can evade background checks and other laws (SB23-279); **allow gun violence survivors equal access to the courts** by getting rid of special interest gun industry protections (SB23-168); **establish a three-day wait period to take possession of a firearm** because data shows these kinds of laws can reduce gun deaths by both suicide and homicide (HB23-1219); **prohibit openly carrying firearms near voting**



*Mike speaks at a bill signing ceremony for his bill to strengthen Colorado's "red flag" law and other gun violence prevention legislation.*

**locations (HB22-1086); strengthen the requirement that domestic violence offenders relinquish firearms (HB21-1255); strengthen background check laws** to include certain misdemeanor offenses indicating violent tendencies, like assault, child abuse, bias crime, or cruelty to animals (HB21-1298); **restore local control in firearms regulations** so that cities and towns have some discretion to protect safety in their areas (SB21-256); **create a duty to report lost and stolen firearms** to assist law enforcement in solving the crime and to reduce the risk of another crime being committed with a stolen weapon (SB21-078); **require safe storage of firearms** to reduce the risk of theft or accidental discharge (HB21-1106); **create the Colorado Office of Gun Violence Prevention** to increase awareness of other gun safety laws and resources (HB21-1299); and to **create Colorado's Red Flag "Extreme Risk Protection Order" law**, a legal process whereby law enforcement officials or family members can ask a court to issue an order for removal of firearms from a person who is found to be a risk to others or him- or herself. (HB19-1177)

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

*Our Colorado way of life includes spending time outside and not having to worry about clean air or safe drinking water. We owe a livable climate to our children and their children.*

**Decarbonization Tax Credits To Save Money & Reduce Pollution (HB23-1272)** – **I sponsored this bill to make Colorado a national leader in using targeted tax credits for individuals and businesses to save money, save energy, and reduce pollution.** The bill provides tax credits for electric vehicles & bikes, installation of heat pumps, geothermal electricity development, pollution reduction in industrial facilities, and more, reducing costs of electric vehicles or efficient home heating and cooling by thousands of dollars. This historic legislation builds upon recent federal laws, improves our air quality, and is critical in helping the state meet its climate goals. *Status: signed into law.*

**Clean Energy Plans To Reduce Climate Change Pollution (SB23-198)** – A few years ago, the state legislature passed legislation requiring utilities to prove how they'll reduce greenhouse gas pollution. **I sponsored this bill to make sure utilities will reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2030, by strengthening requirements for Clean Energy Plans.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Cleaning up "Orphan Wells" from Oil & Gas Drilling (SB22-198)** – When an oil or gas operating company goes bankrupt, it may not be able to clean up its well sites. That means the cost falls on the taxpayers, or worse, well sites aren't cleaned up at all, posing environmental and health risks. **I sponsored this bill to make sure the oil and gas industry, not taxpayers, takes care of**

**this cleanup work.** Companies will pay a modest fee per-well to create a "mitigation fund" to clean up orphan wells without using tax dollars. *STATUS – signed into law.*

**Environmental Justice & Tackling Climate Change (HB21-1266)** – Historically, the costs of energy production and industrial processes have not been born evenly across society. In particular, communities of color and low-income neighborhoods have often found themselves exposed to higher-than-average levels of pollution. **I sponsored this bill to require better state engagement with environmental justice communities – communities that are disproportionately impacted by pollution.** This bill also builds on a 2019 bill to reduce greenhouse gas pollution by creating specific pollution reduction requirements for major sectors of the economy. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Energy Efficiency Options for New Residential Construction (HB20-1155)** – Energy efficient, low carbon construction options are increasingly affordable for new homes, but it's more difficult and expensive to retrofit these options after a home is built. **I sponsored this bill so that builders will offer energy efficiency options at the time of purchase, giving buyers the option to save money and energy over the lifetime of owning a home.** Buyers can decline anything they don't want. *STATUS: signed into law.*

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT, *continued*

I've also supported conservation legislation to: **Strengthen greenhouse gas pollution reduction targets** (SB23-016); **Speed up review & approval of permitting for residential solar installations** by investing in technology to automate review processes (HB23-1234); **Conserve water in oil & gas operations** (HB23-1242); **Require better disclosure of chemicals used in oil & gas operations** (HB22-1348); **Test water in schools and child care centers for lead** (HB22-1358); **Restrict the sale of consumer products like carpets,**

**food packaging, and children's clothing treated with dangerous "PFAS" chemicals** (HB22-1345); **Improve Colorado's low recycling rates** (HB22-1355); **Better protect Coloradans from release of toxic chemicals into our air** (HB21-1244); **Require companies that use toxic air pollutants to notify the nearby community** when there is a release (HB20-1265); and grant more local control over oil and gas operations while **prioritizing community health and safety** in state permitting (SB19-181).

## EDUCATION: INVESTING IN OUR KIDS & OUR FUTURE

*An adequately funded system of public education is one of the basic functions a state should provide. For too long Colorado has ranked in the bottom 10 states in K-12 funding, teacher pay, and the cost of higher education.*

**Expanding Access to Free Community College (HB22-1002 & HB22-1390)** – Colorado's "ASCENT" program allows high school seniors to take an additional, fifth year of high school to pursue concurrent enrollment courses at a local community college (like CCA) with no tuition cost, saving thousands of dollars. Historically, ASCENT has been capped at 500 students per year – hundreds fewer than there are students wanting to pursue ASCENT. **I sponsored HB 1002 to eliminate the cap, making ASCENT eligible to any qualifying student.** HB 1002 was incorporated into the annual "School Finance Act," HB22-1390. *STATUS – signed into law.*



**Protecting Education Funding (HB20-1420)** – In 2020, the U.S. Congress made tax law changes that would have very negatively impacted Colorado's ability to fund education and other priorities at a time when we were already struggling through the COVID recession. **I co-sponsored this bill to stop the impact of these federal tax changes on Colorado, protecting more than \$130 million for the State Education Fund.** *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Adult High School Educational Options (SB23-003)** – Many Coloradans are forced to leave high school early due to various life circumstances and face barriers that make it difficult to return and earn their degree. **I sponsored this bill to create a pathway for adults over 21 to get their high school diploma free of cost,** making it easier to find a decently-paying job. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Technical College Funding (HB18-1322)** – I secured \$1.2 million in the state budget for Area Technical Colleges (ATCs), including Pickens Tech in Aurora. Area Technical Colleges like Pickens offer valuable technical training that helps students of all ages compete for good-paying jobs. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**ASCENT Concurrent Enrollment & Graduation Rates (HB17-1294)** – Until recently, ASCENT students were not counted as high school graduates until the end of the 5th year. Thus, high-achieving ASCENT students used to be counted as "failing" to graduate high school on time in 4 years, penalizing schools and school districts with ASCENT students. I sponsored this bill to correct the problem by counting an ASCENT student as having graduated from high school when the high school graduation requirements are met. *STATUS – signed into law.*

## MAKING HEALTHCARE MORE AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE

*Healthcare remains too expensive and the details of healthcare costs and billing can be too opaque for many people. Medical debt is a leading cause of financial hardship and bankruptcy for families in Colorado. Healthcare and mental health should be more affordable and easier to access, and we must remedy disparities in access to and treatment within healthcare systems.*

**Protecting Coloradans from Medical Debt (SB23-093)** – Too many Coloradans struggle to pay medical bills and are frustrated with the lack of transparency when paying for medical services. **I sponsored this bill to strengthen our consumer protections related to medical debt and out-of-network billing.** This bill requires a health-care facility to provide an estimate of the total cost of a self-pay service, requires a debt collection agency collecting on a medical debt to provide to the consumer an itemized statement to dispute the validity of the debt, and caps debt interest at 3% per year. *Status: signed into law.*

To make healthcare more accessible and affordable, I have also supported the following bills to: **protect credit scores** by disallowing medical debt from being reported to credit agencies where it can negatively impact credit scores (HB23-1186); **cap "epi-pen" costs** at \$60 (HB23-1002); **save Coloradans money on prescription drugs** by empowering the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to establish "upper price limits" on more costly drugs (HB23-1225); **reduce surprise healthcare charges** by prohibiting certain "facility fees": (HB23-1215); **create the**

*MAKING HEALTHCARE MORE AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE CONTINUED ON PAGE 7*

## MAKING HEALTHCARE MORE AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE, *continued*

**“Colorado Option”** so that residents of our state will have more choice in the healthcare market (HB21-1232); **cap insulin prices** (HB21-1307); **increase consumer protections in billing** for lower-income patients by creating limitations on collections practices (HB21-1198); continue the re-insurance program created in 2019 **to lower premiums on the individual market** (SB20-215); **allow seniors 65+ with disabilities to buy in to Medicaid** at their option (SB20-033); **require insurance coverage of fertility treatments** (HB20-1158); **increase transparency of hospital costs** (HB19-1001); **limit out of network or “surprise” billing** by health care providers (HB19-1174); **create oversight for freestanding emergency rooms to control costs** (HB19-1010); and reduce **maternal mortality rates** (HB19-1122).

To increase access to mental health services, I have supported legislation to: **expand access to school-based mental health screenings for students** in grades 6-12 (HB23-1003); dedicate \$450M in federal COVID relief funds to comprehensively improving mental health care and substance use treatment (12 separate bills in the 2022 legislative session); **invest over \$100M to substance abuse treatment** (SB21-137); require insurance companies to **cover an annual mental health exam** (HB21-1068); **create a statewide suicide help hotline, 988** (SB21-154); **increase access to counseling services for youth** 12 years and older (HB19-1120); **fund more counselors in high-need elementary schools** (HB19-1017); **require insurance companies to cover prevention and treatment of mental health conditions** (HB19-1269).

## HONORING VETERANS & SERVICEMEMBERS

*Colorado has a long tradition of military service. As the son and grandson of veterans I appreciate the sacrifices that men and women in uniform, and their families, make for our country. Our state laws can compensate veterans and their families for sacrifices in the line of duty and can help veterans re-integrate into civilian life once they have concluded their service.*

### Supporting Veterans Service Organizations (HB17-1056) –

Thousands of low-level offenders are sentenced to perform community service each year in Colorado, often in conjunction with probation. However, many Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) were excluded from being able to supervise individuals performing community service. I sponsored this bill to solve this problem by allowing 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(19) VSOs to supervise community service just like other non-profits, so that they can benefit from this kind of work. STATUS: signed into law.

### Continue Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs (SB17-212) –

The state Board of Veterans Affairs is comprised of volunteers who work with the Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs to assist veterans in claiming benefits. The board also advocates for veterans in housing, employment, and other issues and oversees grant making to VSOs. I sponsored this bill to continue the state board so it can perform this important work. STATUS: signed into law.

I have also sponsored resolutions to **honor the service of World War II veterans** (HJR23-1012; HJR22-1009; SJR20-012) and **Vietnam veterans** (HJR19-1009).

I've also supported veterans' legislation to: **expand access property tax reductions for veterans with disabilities** (HB23-1052) and **streamline the process for claiming these benefits** (SB23-036); **expand access to mental health services for veterans** by providing state funding for up to 26 mental health visits per year for veterans who have exhausted VA mental health benefits (HB23-1088); **continue the state income tax deduction**



Mike receiving a “Representative of the Year” award from the United Veterans Committee of Colorado.

**for military retirement benefits** which has the effect of reducing income tax liability for veterans by several hundred dollars per year (HB23-1084); **reduce property taxes for Gold Star spouses**, that is for people whose spouses have died in the line of duty to our country (HCR22-1003 – state constitutional amendment approved by voters in 2022); **prevent housing discrimination based on veteran status** with enforcement by the Colorado Civil Rights Division (HB22-1102); **improve access to “veteran’s treatment courts”** so that veterans with service-connected mental health conditions can have better odds of successfully completing a probation sentence (HB21-1016); **fund mobile veterans’ support**

**services and a veteran’s suicide reduction pilot program** (SB21-032; SB21-129); **restore state benefits for LGBTQ veterans** who were discharged less than honorably from the armed services due to their identity (SB21-026); **make state park entrance free for Purple Heart recipients** (HB21-1116); increase portability of occupational license credentials, to help military families who move frequently continue to practice their professions (HB20-1326); **increase pay for Colorado National Guard members** (SB20-091); **grant in-state tuition status at community colleges** for active duty service members, veterans, and dependents (HB20-1275); **clarify tax residency for active duty service members** (SB19-029); and **require Colorado courts to favorably consider completion of a veterans’ court treatment program** when considering an application to seal criminal justice records (HB18-1078).

# GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY

*There is too much money in politics and too much of that money is hard-to-follow "mystery money". Voting should be as easy as possible for all eligible voters.*

**Reforming Judicial Discipline (HB23-1019 & HCR23-1001)** - For the past few years, media reports have highlighted allegations of improper conduct in our state judicial branch. **I sponsored this bill to increase accountability & transparency of judicial discipline proceedings to the public.** It would require the Commission on Judicial Discipline to report aggregated information and to keep complainants advised of how any complaint they file with the commission is proceeding. *STATUS: signed into law.* A related proposed constitutional amendment would **create an independent body** to decide whether a justice or judge engaged in misconduct. *STATUS: Passed legislature in 2023. Colorado voters will be asked to approve this constitutional amendment during the November 2024 election.*

**Increased Transparency for Tax Ballot Measures (HB21-1321)** - Colorado voters face complicated tax ballot measures, but credible information about these measures can be hard to come by. **I sponsored this bill so that the ballot initiative process will have more information for voters.** Ballot titles will indicate what state services could be cut by a tax law change, and the "Blue Book" that voters receive each fall will contain a table showing how tax law changes would benefit voters of lower, middle, or higher income levels. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**More Frequent Reporting By Lobbyists (HB19-1248)** - In Colorado's time-limited, 120-day legislative session, the

legislative process moves quickly, but previously lobbyists were only required to report monthly. **I sponsored this bill to require 72-hour reporting of lobbying during the session and to close loopholes** that arise when attorneys also act as lobbyists and do not report their lobbying activity. *STATUS: signed into law.*

**Protecting Taxpayers from False Claims (HB22-1119)** - In recent years, Colorado has dedicated billions of dollars to COVID recovery. Unfortunately, some unscrupulous actors have perpetrated fraud on the state, which really means on taxpayers. **I sponsored this bill to give the Colorado Attorney General authority to take action against those who defraud taxpayers,** enabling recovery of improperly claimed state funds with added penalties. This creates consequences for bad actors and an incentive against fraud in the first place. *STATUS - signed into law.*

I've also sponsored and supported legislation to: **increase transparency for so-called "independent expenditure committees"** that can spend unlimited money to influence elections (HB19-1318); **increase transparency for "electioneering communications,"** which are political ads sent to voters close to an election (SB19-068); **improve enforcement of campaign finance laws** (SB19-232); and **modernize open records laws** by requiring government entities to make information available electronically instead of on paper (SB17-040).

## A BIT ABOUT ME...



I've been a resident of Aurora for 17 years and live in North Aurora with my partner and our pets. Like a lot of us in Colorado, I grew up in another part of the country. But not long after first coming here, I felt Colorado speaking to me, and I jumped at the chance to come back for good. My full story, though, begins with my parents, and their parents, and their parents before them.

**Both of my father's parents were from families who fled religious persecution in Eastern Europe and sought refuge in America.**

My grandfather arrived here when he was 4 years old, speaking no English. But he learned English, completed school, and put himself through college and medical school, going on to practice medicine for decades, often helping patients from immigrant families like his.

**My mom's dad never received formal education beyond ninth grade, because he had to work to support his family.** Both of his parents had immigrated too, escaping the legacy of the famine in Ireland, and they had many children to support.

Despite the differences in their circumstances, my grandparents were able to work hard and save and create greater opportunities for their kids - my parents - than they enjoyed themselves.

**That's how it's supposed to work in our country - if you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead. That's the American Dream.**



**Public service and community involvement are values I learned from my family at an early age.** My grandmother was a tireless advocate for senior citizens in the small town where she lived. My mother volunteered for years in the public school district where I grew up. My father, both grandfathers, and two great-uncles served in the U.S. Army.

My mother worked as a librarian, and as a kid I spent a lot of time in libraries. My father got up before the sun every morning to go work and often came home after the sun was down.

**All of that impressed on me to get your facts straight and work hard, and I try to bring that approach to my role as a state legislator.**

In school I studied economics because economics is about who gets ahead and who doesn't and whether prosperity is widely shared, or not. Later in life I went back to school to study law to learn how to be a better advocate for civil rights and preserving our environment.

**As a state legislator I put my background to work to make our tax code fairer; increase affordable housing funding; strengthen consumer protection laws; clean up our air and water and fight climate change; protect the right to vote; and more. I always try to think about how our state can be a place where opportunity remains alive for anyone who reaches for it - like it was for my grandparents.**

