



*Your voice for healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans*

**July 2025**



### **Progress Through Advocacy: Our 2025 Legislative Report & Scorecard**

Colorado's 2025 legislative session took place under immense financial pressure—with a \$1.6 billion budget deficit and threats to Medicaid funding. Yet thanks to powerful advocacy, living/lived experience, and bipartisan commitment to mental health, together we achieved meaningful progress.

Mental Health Colorado championed and helped pass key legislation that strengthens mental health parity in insurance coverage, funds a statewide study on universal health care, and improves access to overdose education in schools. We also helped defeat harmful bills that would have threatened gender-affirming care, reproductive access, and healthful responses to substance use.

In this year's Legislative Report & Scorecard, you'll find a full breakdown of the bills we supported and opposed, how lawmakers voted, and the collective impact of our Brain Wave network of advocates.

[!\[\]\(17413706fd4997a1a4bdf85c6864eee1\_img.jpg\) Download the Full Report](#)

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## Friends of Mental Health Colorado: Thank You!



Last week, we gathered with dedicated advocates, longtime supporters, and new friends at our **Friends of Mental Health Colorado Happy Hour**—and what a joy it was. From meaningful conversations to laughter and connection, the evening reminded us why this work matters.

We're so grateful to everyone who joined us to celebrate our shared mission of promoting mental well-being across the lifespan. Events like these are more than just a chance to reconnect—they help fuel our movement, deepen relationships, and strengthen our collective voice.

Whether you've been with us for years or just found your way to this community, we're so glad you're here. 🍷

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## In The News



### The 'Big Beautiful Bill' is Ugly for Coloradans' Health

*Emma Pinter & Wendy Buxton-Andrade | 7/3/25 | The Denver Post*

“We come from different places along the political spectrum, but as Coloradans, we agree on a shared set of values. We believe in fiscal responsibility. We believe in strong communities. And we

believe that public policy should help people, not punish them. There’s nothing “beautiful” about a bill that strips away stability and increases suffering—if that’s what this new law leads more communities to do.

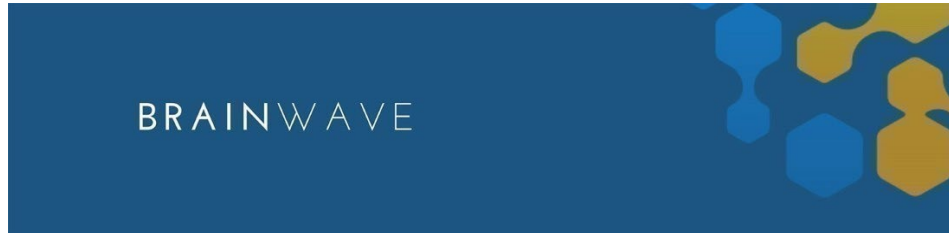
This is a moment that demands unity, not division. We urge our local leaders, health professionals and residents to continue raising their voices to highlight these issues. Let your representatives in Congress know that Coloradans won’t stand by while health and dignity are put on the chopping block. Healthy Americans should be the number one priority.”

[Read the Full Article](#)

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## The Brain Wave Policy Corner

### *Legislative & Policy Updates on Mental Health in Colorado*



#### 1. **Crisis Services Streamlining**

SB 25-236 went into effect July 1 Effective July 1, Senate Bill 25-236 consolidated Colorado Crisis Services and the national 988 line into a unified crisis response system, simplifying access for individuals experiencing mental health or substance use emergencies. This legislative move is designed to reduce confusion and enhance the responsiveness of statewide mental health crisis assistance. [Learn more.](#)

#### 2. **Heightened Demand & Funding Transition for LGBTQ-Focused 988 Services**

Starting July 1, federal support for LGBTQ-specific 988 mental health counselor services was discontinued. Colorado is actively seeking state funding to maintain “press 3” services for LGBTQ callers. Usage is up significantly: total 988 contacts (calls, texts, chats) increased 15% year-over-year, with 54% of English-speaking users identifying as male Colorado Public Radio. [Learn more.](#)

#### 3. **Behavioral Health Administration Launch Deadline Extended**

Lawmakers extended the deadline for establishing regional Behavioral Health Administration service organizations until July 2025. This marks a key milestone toward fully operational statewide behavioral health infrastructure. [Learn more.](#)

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## A View from Washington, D.C.



### 1. **Executive Order on Homelessness & Involuntary Commitment**

Dated July 24–25, President Trump signed a high-impact executive order directing local and state governments to increase involuntary hospitalization or institutionalization of unhoused individuals experiencing mental illness or substance use disorders. The order also reprioritizes federal funding away from harm reduction and housing-first approaches, instead promoting law enforcement and treatment compliance measures. [Learn more.](#)

### 2. **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline “Press 3” (LGBTQ Youth Service) Terminated**

Effective July 17, SAMHSA discontinued the LGBTQ-specific “Press 3” option within the national 988 lifeline—eliminating tailored crisis counseling for queer youth aged primarily under 25. The specialized service supported over 1.3 million young people since 2022, and its removal has sparked concern among LGBTQ advocates and mental health groups about increased risk of harm and loss of culturally competent care. [Learn more.](#)

### 3. **New Bipartisan Bill to Expand School-Based Mental Health Services (H.R. 7108)**

Introduced in July by Representatives DeLauro (D-CT), Hayes (D-CT), and Fitzpatrick (R-PA), the Expanding Access to Mental Health Services in Schools Act aims to help under-resourced school districts recruit and retain a broader, more diverse mental health workforce—including counselors, social workers, and psychologists. The legislation responds directly to widespread federal grant cuts and staffing shortages, building on \$500 million in support provided under the Safer Communities Act. [Learn more.](#)

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## From Crisis Response to Lasting Change



**MENTAL HEALTH  
COLORADO**

## **SB21-137'S IMPACT: ADVANCING HEALTH CARE, NOT CRIMINALIZATION**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Details/Impact</b>
<b>WHAT IT DID</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invested \$113 million to expand access to mental health and substance use care across Colorado.</li> </ul>
<b>WHY IT STILL MATTERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nearly 1 in 3 Coloradans in jail have a diagnosed mental health condition—and that number hasn't decreased.</li> </ul>
<b>LASTING SYSTEMS CHANGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established and expanded 40+ co-responder programs and 22 mobile crisis teams, now operating statewide.</li> </ul>
<b>REAL RESULTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-responder programs led to a 25–40% reduction in arrests during mental health crises in some counties.</li> </ul>
<b>BIGGER PICTURE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nearly 60% of jail bookings in Colorado involve people with behavioral health needs—this law helps change that.</li> </ul>

### ***PASSING LAWS, CHANGING PRACTICES, & BUILDING A MOVEMENT***

SB21-137 may have passed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but its legacy continues to reshape Colorado's behavioral health system in 2025 and beyond.

Known as the Behavioral Health Recovery Act of 2021, this law directed \$113 million into expanding community-based services—funding mobile crisis teams, co-responder programs, peer supports, and school-based care. These are not temporary programs. They are now integrated into Colorado's ongoing behavioral health infrastructure, helping people access help outside of jails and emergency rooms.

That matters, because the problems haven't gone away. Nearly 1 in 3 Coloradans in jail have a diagnosed mental health condition, and over 60% of jail bookings involve behavioral health needs. SB21-137 helped change the trajectory by supporting 40+ co-responder programs and 22 mobile crisis teams across the state. In counties with these models, agencies have reported 25–40% fewer arrests during mental health emergencies.

This law shows us what's possible when we prioritize care over punishment—and build systems that endure long after a crisis.

Next month, we'll turn our focus to youth and families, exploring how early intervention and strong support systems can prevent crises before they begin.



42nd Annual **tribute** Fundraising Gala

Saturday | 10.18.25  
Grand Hyatt Denver

Mental Health Colorado's **42nd Annual Tribute Fundraising Gala** is coming up this fall, and we hope you'll join us for a powerful evening celebrating mental health champions across Colorado! On October 18, join us at the Grand Hyatt Denver to celebrate the people and partners driving mental health progress in our state.

Enjoy an inspiring evening complete with a cocktail hour, three-course dinner, powerful speakers, live music, and opportunities to support healthier minds across the lifespan.

[\[Reserve your seat today!\]](#)

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