

## **Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee**

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# Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee

## Committee Charge

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Pursuant to Section 2-2-1305.5, C.R.S., the Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC) Review Committee was created to review the COYAC's work and to recommend legislation regarding issues affecting Colorado youth. The COYAC consists of 44 members and is charged with examining, evaluating, and discussing the issues, interests, and needs affecting Colorado youth.

## Committee Activities

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During the 2021 interim, the committee held three meetings. The committee discussed the COYAC's work and heard presentations from the COYAC youth on their legislative recommendations. The following subsections discuss the committee's actions during the 2021 interim.

**Youth mental health.** The committee heard presentations from the COYAC students about the challenges youth face with mental health and accessing proper mental health supports. The students discussed aspects of Safe2Tell Colorado and Colorado Crisis Services and how those organizations are promoted in Colorado schools. Bill A addresses the promotion of youth mental health services in schools.

**Foster care youth education waivers.** The COYAC students made presentations to the committee about the obstacles to achieving postsecondary education for foster care youth. The students discussed potential solutions for improving access for foster care youth to various postsecondary education institutions, including creating education waivers and improving counseling services. Bill B addresses foster care youth education waivers and counseling services.

**COYAC enabling legislation.** The committee heard presentations from the COYAC students about limitations the current COYAC statutes place on the organization and the need for more flexibility in the laws that govern the COYAC. During their presentations, the students discussed the COYAC application processes, the limited leadership positions in the organization, and the potential benefits of allowing for virtual meetings. Bill C modifies the COYAC statutes.

## Committee Recommendations

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As a result of committee discussion and deliberation, the COYAC Review Committee recommends the following three bills for consideration in the 2022 legislative session.

**Bill A — Promoting Crisis Services to Students.** The bill requires that student identification cards issued to a public school student contain the phone number, website address, and text talk number for Colorado Crisis Services. If the school is unable to meet this requirement, they must request and display outreach materials from Colorado Crisis Services. The bill also requires that the Department of Human Services annually notify each Colorado public school that it can provide outreach materials

explaining the programs and services offered by Colorado Crisis Services. The outreach materials must be provided to schools upon request.

**Bill B – Higher Education Support for Foster Youth.** The bill waives all tuition costs and mandatory fees at Colorado’s higher education institutions for students who have been:

- placed in foster care in Colorado before their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- placed in non-kinship care after their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday; or
- adjudicated neglected or dependent at any time.

To qualify for a waiver, a student must complete an application for federal student aid; work towards a bachelor’s, postgraduate, or an associate’s degree, or a certificate; and remain in satisfactory academic standing. In addition, each higher education institution must designate one employee as a liaison to assist qualified students with receiving a waiver.

**Bill C – Colorado Youth Advisory Council Updates.** The bill makes several changes to the structure of the COYAC including:

- changing when appointments for non-legislative members are made;
- requiring the COYAC to adopt bylaws on leadership structure;
- allowing COYAC members to participate remotely; and
- clarifying that COYAC issue its annual report to the COYAC Review Committee each interim the committee meets.

Finally, the bill changes how the chair and vice-chair of the COYAC Review Committee are appointed.