

Hello Chairperson, Committee Members, and our Bill Sponsors. My name is Brizai Gomez Cortes, and I serve as the Bilingual Community Activator at Metro Caring, Colorado's leading anti-hunger organization that works to meet people's immediate need for nutritious food while working to address hunger at its root.

As the daughter of undocumented parents and an anti-hunger advocate, I'm here to ask for your support on SB21-233 which would provide direct COVID cash benefits for I-TIN holders. COVID-19 unmasked disparities Black, Indigenous, and people of color have experienced for decades, access to economic opportunities is one them. This bill would provide I-TIN holders with economic relief they've been excluded from before, allowing them to pay housing, afford nutritious food, and widen access to health care.

I received three stimulus checks from the federal government. From the total amount I've received, I gave my undocumented parents half. Not because they asked me to, and not because it should be my duty to do so, but because the government and our leaders have failed them. In Colorado, \$156 million in state and local taxes in 2018 were paid by I-TIN holders according to the American Immigration Council. Yet, undocumented Coloradans are being denied COVID relief.

At Metro Caring we saw an increase of 300% demand on our food bank, many undocumented families make up the line. Families are not only struggling to afford their next meal, they are scared of piling up medical bills under COVID-19, our families can not afford to get sick. We must change the narrative of how we treat the disenfranchised members of our state. Not only would this bill have a positive impact on I-TIN holder's lives but that it would flow into our state's economy as well.

On behalf of the undocumented community and our 75,000 community members at Metro Caring , I ask you to support this crucial bill. Thank you for your time.

Senate Business, Labor, & Technology

05/24/2021 01:30 PM

SB21-233 CDLE Unemployment Insurance Division Enterprise

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Christian Klountcha For Colorado People's Alliance	My name is Christian, I left my country because of war and atrocities of the army, I am a father of 4 kids, and have been accused of working with the separatist group called amba boys operating in the south and north west region. I have been arrested and detained by the Cameroon army. I have always been very concerned about climate issues, because in Africa it has created great disturbances in the seasons leading to great famines in certain locaties and the death of several people. Concerning the conditions of immigrants, I have been one of the main leaders in Mexico in Tapachula who fought for the improvement of conditions for immigrants. I am really experiencing a hard financial time right now because I applied for asylum and I am still waiting for my paperwork . It is really challenging to pay rent utilities, feed myself and take care of my children in Cameroon. I am here to bring more opportunities to my family and the pandemic not only made it harder to be an immigrant, it has changed all of my plans and opportunities.
Azucena Mejia For Colorado Peoples Alliance	My name is Azucena, a Denver resident, and I would like you to support Bill SB21-233. I am the mother of four young girls who were born in this country. I have provided for my family working in restaurants, landscaping, and cleaning businesses. I have never had any problems with police enforcement and we follow the laws of this country we call home. I am here because I believe that we need to fix the system for us and future generations. I do not qualify for the stimulus check and have been left out of other government help. In October I was told there was no more work for me and my husband carries all the weight now. Our oldest daughter is now working a few hours a week while she still goes to school and pays off her tuition. We hope she is able to get some scholarships to get her by. It is not her responsibility to support the family financially. I don't want her to have to worry about paying for utilities or other expenses. She has enough to worry about. Please support this bill.
Julio X For Colorado Peoples Alliance	My restaurant was doing to-go orders only once the restrictions tightened and I was working regularly. I contracted covid-19 and was hospitalized for 7 days at Denver Health and quarantined when released. The hospital referred me to a housing assistance program but I did not qualify. I relied on good people to bring food and other items to me and I couldn't have any contact with anyone or go out for basic necessities. I was out of work a total of 28 days without pay. I was able to go back to work when cleared by the doctor but did not receive any financial help in the meantime. I was behind on rent and other bills then

	<p>and currently since they had to cut my hours and eventually I had to look for a different job.</p> <p>I asked my employer about the aid that he was receiving from the government to keep the business open and employees on payroll. He said that that money was only for people that were working and didn't offer any solutions while I was out. We didn't have access to paid sick leave before but were never fired from the job when I got sick. I assumed I was an employee and that government help was to keep people with a paycheck. Now that I had to look for another job, I was out of income and have exhausted other financial help programs. Everyone is struggling and I don't have family in Colorado except for my kid who I cannot really help financially with much. I did not choose to get sick but it's hard to avoid exposure when I have responsibilities and have to go out to work and interact with many people. If we have to work that is okay but it is scary to think I cannot rely on any help if I get sick again.</p>
<p>Rosa X For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>Good afternoon, my name is Rosa, I am a long time resident of Colorado Springs, mother of three young adults, and immigrant business owner. My 3 children grew up in Southern Colorado Springs all of their life and I have owned a small family business in commercial cleaning for around 16 years. When the pandemic started our business started to decline as a result of office closures that deemed our service not essential if they were working from home. Thankfully other clients decided to keep our services regardless. Two people were employed through my business but unfortunately are not eligible for unemployment or to receive the federal economic stimulus checks that now amount to \$3200. As a small business we took a hard hit and I was not able to keep the other employees. I kept looking for financial resources for the workers and some other family members but they practically are non-existent. Both of my employees have been outstanding in their work and have built a life in this country but unfortunately regardless of their contributions to this country and the unemployment insurance system they are not eligible for relief due to their status. I will like for you to consider voting in favor of this proposal because it will ensure that hard working people, and in particular essential workers have safety nets when there is a pandemic but also when life gets hard. No one knows where their life will turn and it is okay to have a little help. I hope that a program like this will serve my community, your constituents, and our economic recovery. Please vote YES on SB21-233.</p>
<p>Silvia X For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>My name is Silvia, I will be testifying in support of SB21-233 I am a small business owner in Brighton and I employ 5 immigrant women and myself. I decided to operate my own house cleaning business because it allows me to be autonomous and also work with the values I hold dear to my heart. All of the people I employ and myself have high standards of work and take on very seriously the task of being trusted with</p>

	<p>someone's home. Last year as soon as the pandemic hit I was fighting hard to keep my businesses running. Because of the importance of social distancing and lock downs to slow down the spread of the virus many of my clients made difficult calls and suspended our services. Some of our long term clients would send stipends as a thank you but it was not enough to keep everyone on payroll. Unfortunately I had to let go of everyone except one employee who joins me with the few clients we still have. I feel powerless not being able to provide a better solution for my workers. They are the reason why I am able to expand and have a successful business. I think that a service like this can help families get by while recovering from the pandemic or other hardship in their lives. When my neighbors are doing good it means I also am doing good. I would like to ask that we approve this program, because workers already contribute to the unemployment insurance system and by spending their money in our local Brighton businesses. I am sure that this will impact many families. Please support and vote yes on SB21-233.</p> <p>“There are 126,858 working age Coloradans without work authorization. A recent study by UCLA shows that the unemployment rate for undocumented Americans reached 29% in May of 2020. If the unemployment rate for workers without documentation reached this upper bound, as many as 36,789 unemployed people could be affected, unless the legislature acts now, these individuals will be left without any financial support.”</p>
<p>Martha Ramirez For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>Hi, my name is Martha and I have resided here for 21 years. I have worked hard to support my family and now have 3 young kids. It has been extremely hard to navigate the challenges of this pandemic. At my church we try to help people who are in need and my family has been blessed to be offered some help as well. After I had COVID and was hospitalized for it, my health has been decaying so I cannot work anymore. My husband also was laid off and my sister lives with me because she lost her home due to the inability to pay rent. We are struggles like many American families are and have been for the past year. Bill SB21-233 can help people get through future struggles and let's hope that we don't have another pandemic. This law can help my family, my other co-workers, and the state's economy to recover and have good programs supporting the people that work so hard. Please support this bill. Thank you.</p>
<p>Gloria X For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>My name is Gloria, I have worked at a restaurant in North Denver for 10 years- it is a small family owned restaurant and I am one the people who have worked there the longest. When the pandemic hit I was held for a little but we saw that to-go orders were not enough to keep a lot of staff. Only the owner and family stayed working and I was sent home. They offered us help with food but I had to get some assistance to pay for utilities during the first months. I have a young 10 years old who has been going to school from home. Like many of his classmates, parents are usually scrambling to make ends meet in that area of the City. I went</p>

	<p>back to work once we reopened with limited capacity and sometimes I have to take my kid to work with me because I cannot afford to pay for care at home and his dad is not present. Thankfully he likes to read and entertains himself but I am extremely worried that he is in the restaurant and it's hard for him to wear his mask all of the time. With the new restrictions and winter already here, I am not confident of where the business is going to end up. Unfortunately I did not qualify to receive financial help from the government and need to look for other work. I have been serving for 10 years and don't really know what other work I can do that feels safe. I know my boss is trying to help us but it's also hard for them and everyone else.</p>
<p>Tino X For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>My name is Tino, a long time resident of Aurora where I reside with my family. I would like to ask you to vote yes on SB 21-233. I am fortunate to have my three daughters and wife in my life. My oldest is graduating high school and we are proud that she is pursuing higher education next. Unfortunately this pandemic has presented many challenges, some harder than others. My wife was laid off from her restaurant job and my hours have been cut as well. My work did not pay us for one pay period and didn't offer us any help. As an essential worker, my family worries about me but we have to keep working if we have the opportunity. My wife and my family are not in this country and we are practically alone and we have had to adjust with what we have and have been fortunate to have community help along the way. Like many other families and friends I have in the service industry, we cannot receive government help even when we have been paying our taxes. Bill SB21-233 will allow people like me to feel more safe in a bad economic situation and that we too belong to this economy, because we do. Please vote yes on bill SB21-233.</p>
<p>Karen Nunez For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>I am testifying in support of Bill SB21-233 At the end of March of 2020, my family and I were faced with the challenge of not knowing how this pandemic was going to impact us. At the beginning of April, my mother's work hours were reduced by more than half, and my father was only working 3 days a week. As an undocumented family, we could not look past the fact that we were going to struggle financially for at least a few months. While small businesses could apply for grants, and people were fighting to get help from the government, we did not have the privilege to even hope to have any sort of financial resource. In the first week of January 2021, my family and I got covid. I started having symptoms first, and I was constantly worrying about what would happen if we all had to stop working. My sister, mother and father began having symptoms just a few days after I was tested positive. My father's boss gave him a few days off, and my father made the decision to go back to work because we were not receiving any kind of income. His boss supported the decision because they were working with things that did not require them to be around people. This was heartbreaking as a family because we knew that he had a lot of congestion and body</p>

	<p>aches, but he was still working. Even though we constantly reminded my father to take it slow, he wanted to be able to provide for the family and not be constantly worrying about money. After two weeks of being quarantined, a couple of us finally tested negative, but my mother had a few worrisome symptoms. She started experiencing breathing issues even when taking small steps, and the cough was nonstop. However, as many underrepresented families know, hospital bills are a big fear of ours. My mother wanted to wait a few days to see if things would get better, but they did not. Eventually she decided to go to emergency, and she was lucky to receive a discount to not pay the total amount. Thanks to programs that advocate for healthcare for immigrants, she was able to receive treatment. Please consider this measure to ensure that families like mine, families in your district that work so hard to provide for their families don't have to expose others to this deadly virus, and that we can feel some support when we most need it. I ask you to vote on bill SB21-233, thank you.</p>
<p>Samuel Lara For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>My family and I are from Cd. Juárez, we moved to the United States eight years ago to give my children a better life than the one I had. We had to move because of the situation of violence in which Cd. Juárez was going through, and continues to go through. I did not believe that life was good for my teenage children. They wanted to study and learn a new language and I did not have the resources in Mexico to give them a future. Education is very expensive in Mexico and the salary that I earned there was very little. So, me and my wife had to make the biggest decision we ever made in our lives. I have always taught my family to fight to show that as immigrants we must be respected because we come to work with dignity. Since the very first year we came to live in Denver, we have always filled out taxes as we feel it is our responsibility to contribute to the country and state that we live in where we found an opportunity to succeed. Although we pay for taxes, as undocumented immigrant we have no support from the neither the federal government or the state. During COVID in my church I have helped distribute pantries, not only to our religious community, but to all our Hispanics and African Americans who live near our church or far away who have sought help directly or through friends who we realize need help. By helping disadvantaged families like mine who struggle to survive, I have heard many of them and realized that my family's situation is privileged among the disadvantaged. Many of them have lost their family because of COVID and the expenses of a funeral put in further disadvantage undocumented families and families of color. My family and I have struggled in many different ways since last year, my hours at work have been reduced because of the pandemic and what I earn is not enough to cover my house and medical expenses. Neither I nor my family can ask for unemployment because we do not have papers, the same reason why we cannot receive the stimulus checks. I really hope that all immigrant families like mine can count with financial assistance</p>

	to survive the hard moments that add on top of the pandemic the world is suffering. Please vote yes on SB21-233.
Susana X For Colorado Peoples Alliance	Thank you for hearing my testimony today. I am testifying in support of SB21-233. My name is Susana, I have lived in Colorado for 19 years and have a 16 year old son who was born and grew up in Colorado. We do not have family in the country and I work as hard as I can to be able to provide for him. Last year on March 11th, 2020 I was laid off from my job as a housekeeper at a hotel. I was told it would only be a week or two and after two weeks I was still out of a job. My employer did not give me any resources or a set day for return. I felt so alone and stressed about our economic situation. I do not qualify for any other help but fortunately my son does qualify for medical care support. I started to feel depressed because I like working and it gives me a purpose. There is dignity in working and this country is so blessed to have jobs and resources people can access. I am very grateful for that and it makes me sad that some families like mine are not able to have support, it feels like we are forgotten but we are part of everyday society. I fell behind on my rent and other bills which made it really hard to focus on other necessities like food or personal items. I ended up using the money that I was saving to go to the dentist since I have some health problems. A friend of mine referred me to a program that is providing grant payments for families having a hard time because of COVID. As soon as I spoke with someone and I received the money I paid the rent I was behind on and it made me feel instantly more secure. I am very grateful programs like these exist because I feel I am not alone. I hope that this could be implemented statewide through a more permanent solution so that everyone who works hard can feel some security if they are in a hard situation or get sick and can't work. Please approve this law and help every hard working Coloradan get through difficult times. Vote yes on SB21-233.
Maria Rodriguez For Colorado Peoples Alliance	Thank you representatives my name is Maria, I have two sons and have lived in Colorado for more than 20 years. I am testifying in support of Bill SB21-233 We have all been hit with the pandemic but all of my family is safe. I have worked cleaning almost all of my life I am retired now and. My sons have good jobs and they help me out. They weren't affected during covid and were able to work from home or keep working. Unfortunately my friends who are also cleaning ladies do not have the same luck I do. When the covid-19 pandemic came to Colorado many of my friends lost their jobs or their hours were cut. Most of them are the head of their household or half of the income of their family. I don't have much but at my church we all collect money, food, and other necessities to help each other but I want my friends to have something more secure. They have worked so hard in this country and it is unfair that they are excluded from help especially when having American-born children. A program like this can help so many people because sometimes you don't know when life will turn around like it did for all

	<p>of us last year when COVID started here. 'Please vote yes to support this measure. Thank you.</p>
<p>Naty Cabrera For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>I would like to provide comments to support Bill SB21-233. I just graduated highschool and my parents have worked very hard to help me save for college. my parents cannot get any help and with covid they have been working so hard. I worry about them because their health is at risk when they have to go work at the restaurants. Their boss doesn't want to help them and when they closed the restaurant last year for a little bit, they were not given any help. They just said they will call them to go back so they had to look for other jobs cleaning . I was still in high school so I couldn't help a lot. I feel that if they had some help they wouldn't be so stressed and I would feel better that they don't have to risk getting covid just because there is no way out. None of us have gotten sick but if we had I don't know how we would be able to pay rent or our bill. This law will help us if we need it and it will impact the lives of many hardworking parents. Please support bill SB21-233.</p>
<p>Kevin Patterson For Colorado Peoples Alliance</p>	<p>Chair and Members of the Committee,</p> <p>My name is Kevin Patterson I am delivering organizational testimony on behalf of Colorado People’s Alliance. In support of Senate Bill 233</p> <p>We have experienced unprecedented times and COVID has changed the way that our everyday lives are being lived. We witness how crucial it is for us to ensure that we have systems set up to support one another regardless of where you were born, how much money you make, or the neighborhood you currently inhabit. For more than a year now essential workers have been putting their lives on the line to make sure that we all and some sense of normalcy. However far too often many of the essential works are excluded when they need the same support that they proved to the rest of society. CO has taken a step in the right direction by establishing the left behind workers fund. We need to make sure now and in the future that those who have been essential in our time of need are no longer excluded, ensuring a better trained and more flexible Colorado workforce that has some support when times get tough. As a lead on this Bill Colorado Peoples alliance would urge this body to support Senate Bill 233.</p>