



Mental Health Colorado, the state’s leading advocate for mental health, urges you to support HB21-1121: Residential Tenancy Procedures.

We know that housing is foundational to overall health and well-being. Without housing, there is no strong mental health across the lifespan. In the last year, the pandemic crisis has hurt our economy, our jobs, and has exacerbated the already existing mental health crisis in our state.

According to Mental Health Colorado screening results, anxiety and depression have increased this past year.¹ Coloradans are anxious, and many of us are anxious about our financial situations.

The connections between housing and mental health are complex and cyclical. Housing instability has been demonstrated to be linked to heightened mental illness symptoms and substance use.² HB21-1121 will provide some vital breathing room to Coloradans in need.

A “Yes” vote for HB21-1121 will extend the period of eviction notices and actions, and prohibit residential landlords from increasing rent more than once in a 12-month period.

Mental Health Colorado supports this bill and respectfully asks for your yes vote.

Flora Welsh
Communications Manager
Mental Health Colorado

¹ The State of Mental Health in America Report (2021). [[Link](#)].

² How Evictions from Subsidized Housing Routinely Violate the Rights of Person with Mental Illness (2010). [[Link](#)].

Good Afternoon. My name is Dr. Kathleen Van Voorhis, and I am the Director of Housing Justice for the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado. I am here today in support of HB 1121 as part of an overall COVID-19 housing stability strategy.

In my role as Director of Housing Justice, I work across the State of Colorado with congregations, non-profits, and local governments to look at short-term solutions for our unhoused, as well as long-term solutions in the creation of affordable housing options. As the 9th most expensive state in the nation, Colorado has struggled with providing affordable housing for years. COVID-19 exacerbated this issue. With the economic downturn, loss of hours or jobs, loss of seasonal work, and increased costs for basic items across the State, we have seen an increase in the number of Coloradans who are struggling to maintain stability, and for many an increase in unhoused individuals, couples, and families across our great State.

As you know, risk of eviction is at the highest levels in history due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are hundreds of thousands of households at risk of eviction in Colorado. The state of Colorado saw requests for rent assistance in January total \$53 million—\$10 million more than all of the rental assistance funding requests in 2020. The federal government's December legislation increased rental assistance funding by \$25 billion, with \$384 million earmarked for Colorado specifically.

The legislative changes we are here today to discuss are ones that will help ensure equity for people of color and low income communities across the State of Colorado. According to Harvard's most recent State of Housing Report, "the shares of Black and Hispanic households behind on housing payments were more than twice as high as that of white households. Among renters, 23 percent of Black households and 20 percent of Hispanic households were behind, compared with 10 percent of white households.

It is also important to note that, eviction is a vicious spiral into homelessness. Eviction leaves renters in a destitute state with nowhere to go. According to the Eviction Lab, "*We face a looming crisis wherein tens of millions of renters are vulnerable to eviction and its inevitable predecessor homelessness.*"

This bill is vital in ensuring tenants who are unable to pay their rent have more time to seek and receive assistance and more time to find stable housing if a landlord wins judgement in an eviction action. It also ensures stability through limiting the number of rental increases allowed in a given year, and increases the notice period of rental increases so tenants can financially plan.

These are basic steps we can take for the common good of our state. With such limited options for affordable housing, increasing the time tenants have to find a place to move to is vital. This slight change allows individuals, couples, and families more time to find stabilized housing options, instead of joining the hundreds of other citizens who have found themselves unhoused over the last year. Limiting rental increases to once per year, increases the notification periods of increases or terminations, leads directly into whether an individual or family can stabilize.

We have all faced significant challenges with COVID. For some with in Colorado, those challenges mean the difference between having a roof over ones head, and living in subzero temperatures unhoused. Our state, and the individuals who live here, are facing historic struggles. I urge you as our elected leaders, to ensure Coloradans have a pathway to stability through a tumultuous and unprecedented time.

Dear Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Jack Regenbogen and I am a Senior Attorney at the Colorado Center on Law and Policy. We are a nonprofit organization that advocates on behalf of Coloradans experiencing poverty. I really appreciate the opportunity to ask for your support of House Bill 1121, which would provide renters with additional time to prepare for an eviction or an upcoming increase in rent.

When a renter experiences an eviction, the consequences are often devastating—to the tenant, to their family, and to the community.

Once an eviction is ordered, the court record follows a renter like a scarlet letter. One study showed that renters who have experienced involuntary displacement are at least 25 percent more likely to face long-term housing challenges than renters who had not.

Evictions are particularly disastrous for families. When a family experiences an eviction, it can destabilize relationships, disrupt child development and contribute to poor academic performance. Forced moves are also particularly burdensome for older Coloradans and people with disabilities, who may need certain housing accommodations.

Evictions also undermine public health, and this was true even before the pandemic. After an eviction, renters are often pushed into substandard housing where they may experience poorer health outcomes and increased poverty.

As community members, we all suffer when an eviction occurs. Forced moves undermine community relationships, and they also cost taxpayers a lot of money. According to one study by a professor at University of Colorado, a single eviction can cost society up to \$10,000.

Colorado's current policies are not structured to adequately allow people to respond to an eviction. Under current law, renters only have 48 hours after an eviction before a sheriff can physically remove them from their home. This short timeframe directly contributes to homelessness by preventing people from being able to find new housing or even to find storage to protect their belongings. Moreover, month-to-month renters currently only receive 21 day notice before a rent increase, which can occur each month, leaving many families unable to prepare for a steep rent hike.

House Bill 1121 would provide additional time to move after an eviction, helping many people avoid having to move into a shelter. This will also provide time to find storage so that people are not at risk of losing everything they own.

Finally, this bill would also impose some reasonable protections around rent, by limiting rental increases to once per 12 months for month-to-month tenants, and also by providing 60-day notice before a rent increase. This change will help ensure that people have time to budget for an increase in the cost of their housing.

By providing this additional time, this bill would help keep families and communities intact. Please support this much-needed legislation and vote yes on House Bill 1121. Thank you for your consideration.