

## Testimony on Baby Bonds

My name is Kiyana Newell, and I'm the Policy Manager at New Era Colorado, a nationally recognized, nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to engaging young people in the political process. New Era Colorado urges a yes vote for House Bill 24 -1297. We believe this is an important first step to ensure baby bonds for future Coloradans.

Since the beginning of our nation's history, the wealthiest people have benefited from oppressive and racist systems that keep black and brown people from gaining economic opportunity and mobility. These rules still guide our society today, leaving most people struggling under the weight of debt while powerful people get bailed out – limiting wealth and opportunity to the already privileged. The Baby Bond program will broaden access to wealth building opportunities for young people especially black and brown folks by giving eligible children a deposit of a predetermined amount of funds into a trust account.

We know from our Statewide Listening Tour in 2021 that young people are extremely burdened with college tuition costs and other student related fees as well as student debt. As tuition rises, those without generational wealth in this country bear the brunt of economic impact as they are forced to take out large loans to go to college. In Colorado, more than 796,900 people have student loan debt, with an average debt burden of more than \$38,000. Statewide, Coloradans carry \$29.4 billion in student debt and borrowers currently owe around \$2-3 billion in private student loan debt. There has been little effort to mitigate this due to Colorado's decreasing public investment in higher education. Additionally, student debt drives racial disparities and harms that impact generations of Coloradans by preventing people from building up savings, making decisions in the best interest of their families, making decisions to start a family, saving for retirement, obtaining quality healthcare, buying a house, and so much more.

New Era Colorado believes a future where every young person can pay for college without going into debt is possible.. We believe that the establishment of a Baby Bonds program can advance economic justice and opportunity for young people of Color in Colorado. Please pass this bill which will ensure thorough study to assess the establishment of the Baby Bonds Program, which is especially consider its impact within the lives of including Black, brown and Indigenous people, as well as low-income households.

Please vote "Yes" on HB24 - 1297. Thank you.