

House Education

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SB23-076 Sunset Continue CO Youth Advisory Council

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Livi Christiansen For themselves	<p>My name is Livi Christiansen. I served as the Senate District 14 Representative for COYAC from 2020-2022 and as the COYAC Co-Chair from 2021-2022. COYAC changed my life; it taught me about the beauty and capacity of democracy and our communities, and it's one of the best things I've ever done. More importantly, COYAC has also helped our communities; COYAC has proposed and passed bills to help with access to mental health resources and higher education for youth with experience in the foster system. This legislative cycle, COYAC has proposed bills with goals ranging from increasing and streamlining access to eating disorder prevention and treatment resources to addressing discipline inequity in public schools. COYAC should continue, both because of the transformative education it provides for the youth who participate in it, and the important and needed progress it has made for our communities. I'm so grateful to COYAC and excited to see what COYAC will accomplish in the future!</p>
Leigh Schmidt For themselves	<p>My name is Leigh Schmidt, and I support the continuation of the Colorado Youth Advisory Council. I am in my second year on COYAC representing Senate District 22. I am also a member of the Executive Committee, and I sat on the interim committee this summer.</p> <p>Before I joined COYAC, I had trouble figuring out how to make the changes I wanted to see in the world. But something clicked when I joined COYAC — it felt like this was how I could make a difference. I get to give other young people hope that things can change. When I brought my ideas to my peers at school, many of them were excited to give their perspectives knowing that they were actually going into something real, something that was going to make a real change.</p> <p>I've gained valuable skills in research, writing, communication, and coalition building, all skills that are helpful for everyone, no matter what they choose to do in the future. COYAC has also helped me gain real-life policy experience that will help me as I, hopefully, go into a career in government.</p> <p>COYAC is also a non-partisan program, and we work hard to discuss all possible viewpoints when creating our policy recommendations. We meet with stakeholders from all across the state and with a wide variety of perspectives, and we learn a lot from everyone on both sides of the aisle, especially in our bipartisan interim committee during the summer. I think it's so important to make sure that we, the next generation of leaders, learn to collaborate with people who don't agree with us.</p> <p>Thanks to our budget for FY 22-23, we were able to have an overnight retreat this August, which was so valuable. We had the funds to reimburse members for transportation, which allowed members from more rural and isolated parts of the state to travel to attend this retreat in</p>

	<p>person. It also allowed us to build a foundation with each other, allowing us to work effectively together during the months when we can only meet virtually.</p> <p>Most important, youth are affected by the actions of this state legislature, and that means that we deserve a say in what happens. I urge the legislature to continue the Colorado Youth Advisory Council and to maintain our budget for FY 23-24 so that we can give future leaders the same experience that I and my peers have had.</p>
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