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Colorado House Democrats 2020 End of First Extraordinary Session Report

MEETING THE MOMENT & GOVERNING RESPONSIBLY IN A CRISIS

With COVID cases on the rise and the long winter months looming ahead, Coloradans could no longer afford to wait for Washington to put partisanship aside and deliver crucial aid. Our state's recovery could hinge on the next few months so House Democrats returned and passed much-needed relief that Congress had failed to provide for months.

After passing a robust relief package in the spring, House Democrats had recently taken action with the governor to direct \$168 million in direct assistance to hundreds of thousands of Coloradans who have been hit hardest by the economic impacts of the pandemic. During this Special Session, we built on this progress and worked to provide relief for even more small businesses and hardworking families across the state.

In a short and laser-focused three-day legislative session, House Democrats delivered on direct relief for restaurants, bars and other struggling small businesses. We approved a package of bipartisan bills that will help families stay in their homes, put food on the table and keep the lights on and the heat going. These bills will also help working parents stay in the workforce with enhanced child care opportunities and expand broadband access so students and teachers can continue to learn through the months ahead.

While only Washington can deliver on the type of aid that Coloradans so desperately need, House Democrats are confident that the close to \$300 million in direct support we approved, along with the tax relief and fee waivers we are providing to small businesses will make a real impact in the lives of Coloradans.

COVID-19 BRIDGE TO RECOVERY

Qualified Retailer Retain Sales Tax For Assistance

[HB20B-1004](#) -- Reprs. Alex Valdez (D) and Kevin Van Winkle (R)

This legislation allows establishments that have been hit particularly hard by capacity restrictions to retain state sales taxes owed from November 2020 through February 2021. This will provide bars and restaurants up to \$2,000 per location and limited to five locations for up to \$10,000 in tax relief each month to help them make ends meet.

COVID-19 Relief Small And Minority Businesses Arts Organizations

[SB20B-001](#) -- Reprs. Leslie Herod (D) and Shane Sandridge (R)

The pandemic has meant restaurants, shops, gyms and bars are operating at limited capacity as cases rise, outdoor dining becomes more difficult, and federal relief has all but evaporated. This bill will help these industries bridge the gap through the difficult winter months ahead.

SB20B-01 provides **\$57 million** in direct aid, grants and annual fee waivers to struggling small businesses, prioritizing those operating in counties experiencing severe capacity restrictions. It will also create grant programs and allocate funds specifically for art and cultural organizations as well as minority-owned businesses.

Housing And Direct COVID Emergency Assistance

[SB20B-002](#) -- Reprs. Tony Exum (D) and Kerry Tipper (D)

Many hardworking Coloradans are on the brink of not being able to pay their rent or mortgage. The impending expiration of federal assistance programs such as enhanced unemployment benefits, leaves millions of Coloradans vulnerable to eviction or foreclosure in the coming months. In fact, according to recent surveys, [over 40 percent](#) of Coloradans are living in a household that is behind on their rent or mortgage and at risk of foreclosure or eviction.

SB20B-002 provides **\$60 million** for emergency housing assistance to landlords and households who are in financial need due to COVID-19. Of the funding, \$1 million will support the Eviction Legal Assistance Fund, which will help Coloradans stay in their homes this winter by providing critical legal assistance for housing-related needs. Finally, the bill puts in place a provision that seeks to ensure tens of thousands of unemployed Coloradans can continue to have access to the federally funded State Extended Benefits Program through December 26. Without these funds, we are likely to see a substantial rise in evictions and homelessness, which will have devastating and long-term consequences as we look to build a recovery that includes all Coloradans.

Money For Energy Utility Bill Payment Assistance

[SB20B-003](#) -- Reprs. Monica Duran (D) and Lois Landgraf (R)

As unemployment numbers remain high and federal resources continue to dwindle, many Coloradans are at risk of losing their utilities – a dangerous outcome in the winter months. This legislation will appropriate \$5 million to the Energy Outreach Colorado Low-Income Energy Assistance Fund in order to meet the 25% increase in applications that Energy Outreach Colorado has seen this year.

Grants To Improve Internet Access In P-12 Education

[HB20B-1001](#) -- *Reps. Mary Young (D) and Matthew Soper (R)*

Internet access is absolutely essential for students during this difficult time, but many families who are struggling with financial stability simply can't afford to cover the cost and the infrastructure is not in place for some school districts to educate their students remotely. Our legislation dedicates **\$20 million** towards increasing our state's broadband capacity – connecting more students to their teachers so that they can learn safely in the months ahead.

Emergency Relief Programs For Child Care Sector

[HB20B-1002](#) -- *Reps. Cathy Kipp (D) and Lois Landgraf (R)*

Boosting child care opportunities helps parents safely return to work, injects money into our economy, and keeps essential child care businesses operating. Colorado's economic recovery depends on its workforce having access to stable child care. Research shows that for every dollar spent on early childhood programs, \$2.25 is contributed to our state's economy.

This legislation will support 2,600 child care providers, preserving child care for over 100,000 children and creating capacity for tens of thousands more. HB20B-1002 distributes **\$45 million** to enable existing child care providers to keep their doors open, help new providers to open, and meet the needs of working parents, especially in child care deserts.

Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program

[HB20B-1003](#) -- *Reps. Lisa Cutter (D) and Rod Bockenfeld (R)*

1 in 3 Coloradans are struggling with food insecurity as more and more families are being forced to choose between paying their bills and putting food on the table. Food banks and their partners need additional assistance to meet the rising demands, especially as the December expiration for federal hunger relief looms. HB20B-1003 devotes **\$5 million** to replenishing essential community services that increase access to food for Colorado families facing food insecurity.

Local Authority To Impose Food Delivery Fee Restrictions

[HB20B-1005](#) -- *Rep. Shannon Bird (D)*

As restaurants limit their seating capacity due to the public health emergency, take-out and delivery have become essential lifelines to keep them in business. However, some third-party vendors are charging exorbitantly high fees that leave restaurants with little to no profit margin on delivery orders. This bill allows some local governments to adopt ordinances that restrict third-party delivery services' fees charged to retail food establishments.

Insurance Premium Tax Payments And Credits

[HB20B-1006](#) -- *Rep. Jeni Arndt (D)*

The General Assembly created the CLIMBER Small Business Loan Program earlier this year to help businesses struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic. Money for the fund is raised by selling insurance premium tax credits with matching private contributions. This bill clarifies that the sale of these tax credits allows investors to apply their tax credit certificates on a quarterly basis and ensures the Colorado Treasury can get the best deal possible for taxpayers by selling the credits before the end of the year.

Transfer To Make Money Available For COVID-19 Emergency

[SB20B-004](#) -- *Rep. Julie McCluskie (D)*

With many hospitals across Colorado reaching critical capacity in recent weeks, additional funds are needed to continue the State's robust public health response. This legislation will transfer \$100 million from the General Fund to the Controlled Maintenance Trust Fund to ensure the State can continue to protect public health while we await additional federal stimulus and reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.