

## DENVER AND THE WEST

# Colorado's birth control program kept afloat by \$2M in temporary funds

The Colorado Family Planning Initiative has become a hot-button political issue

By Jesse Paul

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Nurse practitioner Elizabeth Brock, left, prepares to insert Nexplanone, a subdermal birth control implant, into the arm of patient Mikayla Meyer, right at the Boulder Valley Women's Health Center in Boulder, Colorado on July 29, 2015. (Helen H. Richardson, *The Denver Post*)

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Roughly \$2 million has been pledged in temporary funding to keep afloat a hot-button [Colorado program](#) that provides long-acting reversible contraceptives to low-income and uninsured teenagers and women.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment on Tuesday announced the funding for the Colorado Family Planning Initiative in a news release.

Officials say money for the initiative, which is aimed at reducing teen pregnancy and abortion rates, is coming from more than a dozen organizations.

Over the past seven years, a private foundation donated about \$27 million to boost the program, but the grant money expired July 1. A push to use state taxpayer dollars to continue the program failed in the Republican-led state Senate earlier this year, [killed by ideological and fiscal objections](#).

The program, after the money ceased, [began seeing impacts](#) in the form of long waiting lists and a dearth of services.

"With new funding from Colorado funders and foundations, the initiative will be able to continue training health care providers, educating women on contraceptive choices and subsidizing as many as 6,000 (intrauterine devices) or implants," the release said.

CDPHE says nearly 50 percent of all pregnancies in Colorado are unintended, which research shows can lead to birth defects, low birth weight and maternal depression.

In the past seven years, the program has provided more than 36,000 low- or no-cost intrauterine devices or implants to low-income women. According to CDPHE, between 2009 and 2014, the rates for both teen births and abortions dropped 48 percent.

The state says during the initiative's first three years, an estimated \$79 million in Medicaid costs were averted.

State health officials say they plan to push the legislature — with Gov. John Hickenlooper's support — for funding again next year.

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### **Organizations pledging to contribute:**

- The Ben and Lucy Ana Walton Fund of the Walton Family Foundation
- Buell Foundation
- Caring for Colorado Foundation
- Chambers Family Fund
- The Colorado Health Foundation
- The Colorado Trust
- Community First Foundation
- The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County
- Global Health Foundation
- Kaiser Permanente Colorado
- The Women's Foundation of Colorado