

# MISSION DRIVEN

SPRING 2022

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## MAINTAINING OUR TENACITY REQUIRES YOUR SUPPORT



**LAUREN Y. CASTEEL**  
President & CEO

Recently, I accompanied my dear friend and honorary trustee, Katherine Archuleta, to her induction into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame. I marveled at the diverse and enduring contributions of the 10 women who made up the 2020 class of inductees. Their ceremony might have been postponed for more than two years due to COVID-19, but their persistence never faltered. From civil rights activism and journalism for communities of color to environmental conservation and breastfeeding advocacy, they moved women forward in myriad ways using all their available resources.

What were those resources? Time, Talent, Treasure, Testimony, and Ties – otherwise known as the “five Ts of philanthropy.” It’s a philosophy that conveys philanthropy doesn’t have to look one way. The time spent volunteering, supporting extended family, and leveraging personal networks are as important as the money one gives to a cause.

Listening to each of the women speak their truths from the stage, another “T” crystallized for me. Tenacity was equally present in each of their stories.

### Could tenacity be the sixth “T” of philanthropy?

Without Tenacity, which requires a collective effort, movements derail and momentum stalls. Look at voting rights and abortion care. The Voting Rights Act passed in 1965, yet voter suppression in all its cloaked forms looms large over the 2022 mid-term elections. Roe v. Wade, which has given federal protection to abortion since 1973, is at great risk of being dismantled by the Supreme Court this summer.

*continued on page 2*

2022 ANNUAL LUNCHEON

## FASTER STRONGER GREATER

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2022

COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER  
MILE HIGH BALLROOM  
or recorded version at your home or office

Presented by



**Allyson Felix**  
Athlete, Advocate, Entrepreneur

Annual Luncheon tickets, tables, and sponsorships on sale now at [wfco.org](http://wfco.org)!

See pages 6-7 for details.



» 1.9% of all philanthropic dollars in the U.S. go to women and girls, .5% of U.S. foundation funding benefits women and girls of color

*Maintaining Our Tenacity Requires Your Support, continued*

## Why should you give to The Women's Foundation of Colorado?

From philanthropy to policy to patterns in venture capital, investments in women and girls remain astonishingly inadequate (see statistic on left side of page). As the only statewide community foundation in the state focused on gender, racial, and economic equity, The Women's Foundation of Colorado and our generous donors have an imperative to increase this giving threshold. Within the pages of this newsletter, you will read how your money creates meaningful change in systems, our communities, and individual lives. Look for these stories:

- Bills that The Women's Foundation, our public policy grantees, and several partner organizations support in the **2022 legislative session** will modernize Colorado statute to protect abortion rights from federal threat, make work work for women and families, and increase women's access to basic needs. WFCO will again share our Womanifesto voter guide this fall to support voters in the 2022 election. (page 9)
- **Women & Girls of Color Fund** grantee, Kaizen Food Rescue, is making access to fresh and nutritionally dense food a reality for neighborhoods throughout Metro Denver. (page 11)
- **Equal Pay for Equal Work Act to Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance:** We are ensuring that legislation we helped to pass is implemented equitably. (page 10)
- By December 2023, 100% of our investable assets will meet The Foundation's **gender-lens investment strategies**, including an explicit diverse investment manager commitment. (page 4)
- Allyson Felix, the most decorated track & field U.S. Olympian, will bring inspiration and celebration to our **2022 Annual Luncheon**. She's faster, stronger, greater *and* a case study in using her resources to bring all women across the finish line with her. (pages 6-7)

## Your steady funding streams and unrestricted donations drive our work

Your steady funding streams and unrestricted donations drive our work on behalf of all 2.85 million women and girls who live here. We are grateful for every dollar. Read how you can join a community of giving to sustain the work of The Foundation and our impact for the long haul. Our masks may have come off, but the economic aftershocks of the pandemic are still reverberating for low-income workers who are disproportionately women. Your Time, Talent, Treasure, Testimony, Ties – and Tenacity – are essential to WFCO and the women and girls in Colorado. A great place to start your journey with The Women's Foundation is to join us at our Annual Luncheon on October 14.

It's true, the work to disrupt systems can take years or even decades. Percentage points and policies don't ever seem to change quickly enough. Women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ communities know this all too well. But by employing the "six Ts of philanthropy" together, we will arrive at a future where women and girls of every background and identity thrive.

I recall the words of one of the 2020 Colorado Women's Hall of Fame inductees, Lupe Briseño. She was a labor leader who led the Kitayama Carnation Strike in the 1960s to bring better wages and treatment to the Mexican women who worked there. The strike didn't result in all of the outcomes she wanted, but she certainly illuminated a path for women in Colorado who want to support the advancement of other women.

Standing at the podium of the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame induction ceremony, she confirmed her Tenacity was all worth it.

*"I did what I had to do then. If I had to do it all again, I would," Lupe Briseño said.*



**LAUREN Y. CASTEEL**  
President & CEO

# TRUSTEE TRANSITIONS & ADDITIONS

The Women's Foundation of Colorado welcomed eight new trustees to our board on April 1, 2022. The trustees represent many diverse backgrounds and identities of the people who make up the state of Colorado and strengthen The Foundation's expertise in board governance, public policy, community building, and fundraising. They bring the number of WFCO trustees to 26.

## WFCO NEW TRUSTEES



**Sandy Cook**  
Denver  
community volunteer



**Raymond Foxworth**  
Thornton  
First Nations  
Development Institute



**Katherine Gold**  
Denver  
goldbug



**Debbie Hammons**  
Broomfield  
community volunteer



**Shannon Jones**  
Denver  
FirstBank



**Courtney Lussenhop**  
Fort Collins  
OtterCares



**Katherine Rosechild**  
Denver  
The Colorado Health  
Foundation



**Tara Smith**  
Denver  
Colorado Division  
of Insurance



## MEET OUR BOARD CHAIR FAYE TATE

Faye is the vice president for inclusion and diversity at CoBank and is proudly The Women's Foundation's first Black board chair. Faye is well known in the field of inclusion and diversity.

Over her career, she has received many honors, including the 25 most powerful women by the Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce, a woman of distinction by the Girls Scouts of America in Colorado, Leadership Denver's Martin Luther King, Jr. business and social responsibility award, One Colorado's ally award, the Paul Hunter award from the Colorado Human Rights Campaign, and trailblazer award from The Urban League of Metropolitan Denver.

Faye is a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, Denver Alumnae Chapter; the Colorado Women's Forum; Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, Denver Chapter; The Junior League of Denver; and The Links, Incorporated, Denver Chapter.

Formerly, she served on The National Board of Directors for The Human Rights Campaign Foundation. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) strives to end discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and realize a world that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

In addition to her new role as board chair of The Women's Foundation, Faye is a board member for The Arc of Colorado and The Arc of The United States - organizations that advocate for and provide services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

## TRUSTEE TRANSITIONS

**Faye Tate** became board chair on April 1. Other 2022-23 WFCO officers include:

- **VICE CHAIR:** **Christina Ortiz**, Denver, community volunteer and executive
- **SECRETARY:** **Tania Zeigler**, Denver, Burn Bright Consultancy, LLC
- **TREASURER:** **Sonya Marques-Correia**, Denver, Margulf Foundation

The Women's Foundation of Colorado would like to thank **Joyce Vigil**, Pueblo, Robb & Vigil LLC, for serving as board chair from April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022 and several more trustees who completed their board terms:

- **Kim Desmond**, San Diego, Mayor's Office at City of San Diego
- **Katie Kellen**, Denver, Wells Fargo Private Bank
- **Brook Kramer**, Denver, Bank of the West
- **Johanna Leyba**, Denver, Leyba Consulting

*"I come to this work because of my fabulous daughter, Elleana, who is a member of the differently abled community. My passion is to ensure that the IDD community is respected, included, and treated with dignity. No person with a disability should be left behind."*





# MONEY ON A MISSION: WFCO'S GENDER-LENS INVESTING TO REACH NEW HEIGHTS

AKASHA ABSHER, SYNTRINSIC INVESTMENT COUNSEL

**Gender-lens investing**, coined in 2009 by the Criterion Institute, is an approach to investing that considers gender-based factors across the investment process to advance gender equality and better inform investment decisions.

**By December 31, 2023**, The Women's Foundation of Colorado will offer donors something that no other community foundation in Colorado can claim: **100% of our investable assets will meet The Foundation's gender-lens investment strategies.**

It started in 2013, when members of Beyond our Borders, a giving circle held at The Women's Foundation of Colorado, encouraged WFCO to use gender-lens investing to align all its resources with its mission. They made the case that "foundations can vastly multiply their impact if their endowment assets were put to further their vision."

There was no question it was the right thing to do. However, many had concerns about sacrificing returns and consequently not being able to support grantmaking. At that time, gender-lens investing was in its infancy, and bias remained within the investing community that socially responsible investing would result in substandard returns.

However, in 2014, a unique opportunity emerged. Impax Asset Management built the first index of the highest-rated companies in the world for advancing gender-diverse leadership. It introduced the first mutual fund that followed that index, the Pax Ellevest Global Women's Leadership Fund.<sup>1</sup> WFCO used the monies in the Beyond our Borders fund and made its first step toward aligning money with mission.

By 2016, lingering performance concerns were put to rest. The fund exceeded its prospectus benchmark by 1.0%<sup>2</sup> while investing in companies with a higher representation of women on the board of directors and executive management. The investment committee unanimously agreed to increase the gender-lens allocation in its long-term portfolio and launched a new 100% gender-lens investment portfolio for donor-advised fundholders and giving circles. It was the first of its kind in Colorado.

With the help of Syntrinsic Investment Counsel, WFCO's investment committee comprised of trustees and investment experts defined The Foundation's impact goals:

- Address gender and racial disparities
- Expand access to capital
- Further economic security
- Learn and share knowledge

The committee broadened its investment strategies to align the gender-lens and long-term portfolio with the impact goals. These four investment strategies included gender mandate strategies (strategies focused on workplace equity, access to capital, and products and services for women); environmental, social, and governance (ESG) integration; shareholder advocacy; and diverse investment managers.

In 2021, The Foundation updated its strategic plan, announcing an overarching goal of gender equity, racial equity, and economic equity.

## An Explicit Commitment to Diverse Managers

Through this new lens, the committee determined an explicit commitment to diverse managers was needed to address the under-representation in the asset management industry. The overall percentage of assets under management controlled by diverse owned firms was only 1.4% in 2021. According to the Knight Foundation, 30 of the top 55 foundations have 16.6% of their endowments invested with diverse-owned firms.

Inspired by the Kresge Foundation and the Association of Black Foundation Executives' "25% by 2025" pledge, WFCO seeks to invest at least 25% of the investable assets of the total investment portfolio with diverse managers by 2025. At a minimum, 10% will be invested with managers from under-represented communities of color in the finance industry: Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian.

As of December 31, 2021, 75% of WFCO's investable assets met one of the four gender-lens investment strategies. But The Foundation's eyes are on meeting its next goal: Ensuring 100% of its investable assets meet the investment strategies by the end of 2023.

<sup>1</sup> Impax Asset Management, <https://impaxam.com/pax-world-funds/gender-lens-investing/>

<sup>2</sup> Since Inception performance from 4/22/14 through 9/30/16



Join our gender-lens investing webinar for our community at large on May 19. Register at [wfc.org](http://wfc.org).



Dottie Lamm Leadership Award winners, from left: Natalie Guerra, 2021; Solliana Kineferigb, 2017; Athena Clemens, 2018; Ananda Birungi, 2019.

## DOTTIE LAMM LEADERSHIP AWARD APPLICATIONS OPEN MAY 5

Do you personify resilience and tenacity? Do you live The Foundation's values of promise, leadership, community, learning, equity & inclusion, stewardship & accountability? If you answered yes, identify as a woman, and are between the ages of 16–21, we encourage you to apply for this one-time award of \$2,500.

Former First Lady of Colorado Dottie Lamm is a legendary leader and activist. She was also a founding mother of The Women's Foundation of Colorado, making her mark as the first board chair.

In 1987, we created the Dottie Lamm Leadership Award to honor her commitment to advancing opportunities for women throughout the state of Colorado. The first Dottie Lamm Leadership Award was granted in 1988 and has been awarded annually to up-and-coming Colorado community leaders. Reach out to Kaylyn Fern, development officer, at [kaylynf@wfco.org](mailto:kaylynf@wfco.org) with any questions.

» Visit [www.wfco.org](http://www.wfco.org) from May 5 – June 3 to submit an application or share the opportunity. The winner will be invited to speak at our Annual Luncheon on October 14 and receive \$2,500.

### New Accessibility Tools on Our Website



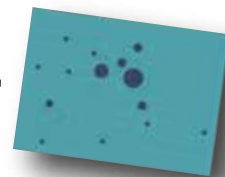
The Women's Foundation of Colorado now provides an inclusive online experience that enables website visitors to access online content and services barrier-free.

As part of our work toward gender, racial, and economic equity, we now feature a range of accessibility and language support tools for you to customize your digital experience through **Recite Me assistive technology**.

Recite Me is a cloud-based software that can be especially helpful if you live with common conditions such as sight loss or dyslexia or if you speak a language other than English (translations to over 100 languages are available).

As we strive to make The Foundation an equitable and inclusive space, it was important to us that anyone be able to access our website. To explore our accessibility support tool, visit [wfco.org](http://wfco.org) and near the top right corner of the website, click the floating pink and purple button with the universal access icon.

## Colorado Ambassador Network



### With You, WFCO CAN!

Join our quarterly virtual Colorado Ambassador Network (CAN) meetings, where you will:

- Meet our board, staff, and others working to advance gender, racial, and economic equity
- Hear our latest legislative updates
- Meet our WINcome and Women & Girls of Color Fund grantees
- Connect to others in your community
- Learn how to take action for Colorado women and their families!

Register at [wfco.org](http://wfco.org) for CAN meetings on Friday, June 10, Friday, Sept. 9, and Friday, Dec. 9. Each meeting begins at 11:30 a.m. with an introduction to The Foundation and why we do what we do, followed by the CAN meeting at 12:00 p.m.

# TICKETS, TABLES, AND SPONSORSHIPS NOW ON SALE!

2022 ANNUAL LUNCHEON

# FASTER STRONGER GREATER

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2022

COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER  
MILE HIGH BALLROOM

or recorded version at your home or office



The Women's  
Foundation of Colorado

Presented by



banking for good



## 2022 Annual Luncheon Speaker

## Allyson Felix

ATHLETE, ADVOCATE, & ENTREPRENEUR

### On and off the track, Felix strives to be "Faster, Stronger, Greater"

Allyson Felix, the most decorated track & field U.S. Olympian in history, will be the guest speaker at our 2022 Annual Luncheon "Faster, Stronger, Greater." Felix also is recognized as an advocate of women and mothers, using her voice to bring attention to systemic inequities such as discrimination against pregnant people, Black maternal health, and access to child care.

Since competing in her first Olympic Games in Athens in 2004, her results on the track are unrivaled. Racing primarily in the 200-meter, 400-meter, and 4x400-meter relay, she captured 13 global titles, 11 Olympic medals, 10 U.S. Championships, and a world record. In 2019, just 10 months after the birth of her daughter, she broke Usain Bolt's record for holding the most world titles.

While she is most recognized for breaking records on the track, she advances and accelerates change for women by breaking gender norms off the track. In 2019, she left her high-profile Nike sponsorship over what she felt were a lack of maternity protections. In an opinion piece she published in *The New York Times*, she stated, *"I've been one of Nike's most widely marketed athletes. If I can't secure maternity protections, who can?"*

The op-ed led to the brand's revision of contracts to include more protections for pregnant athletes.

With new sponsor Athleta and the Women's Sports Foundation, she created a fund to help athletes pay for child care expenses while competing at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

Additionally, Felix uses her voice to bring attention to the health inequities that Black pregnant women experience. Felix was diagnosed with severe pre-eclampsia when she was 32 weeks pregnant and underwent an emergency c-section to deliver her daughter. Given her level of fitness, she never imagined she would experience pregnancy complications, but she later learned that Black women are three to four times more likely to die during delivery than white mothers.

Today, she is among the 17% of Black women who have started or are starting their own businesses. During the pandemic, she founded Saysh, a shoe company and lifestyle brand built for women by women. When she won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics, she was wearing spikes from her own line.

"Allyson Felix inspired a generation of runners to be faster, stronger, and greater," said Lauren Y. Casteel, WFCO president and CEO. "But regardless of background, identity, or ability – all luncheon guests will find inspiration in her using her platform and position on the podium to bring all women across the finish line with her."





## HOST A HOUSE PARTY: FASTER, STRONGER, GREATER IN THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME!

Not able to attend the in-person event? Bring the luncheon to your home or office virtually! As a host, you invite colleagues, friends, or family to celebrate the women in your life and support WFCO. Make your House Party your own - host a wine and cheese party, Sunday brunch, and more! The recorded luncheon video will be available from October 15 to October 25 so you can pick a time that's best for you. The Foundation will help you in your fundraising efforts by providing the tools you need to have an impactful viewing event.

Your HOUSE PARTY KIT includes:

- Gifts
- Invitation to upcoming PEP & EC events
- Digital invitation to send to guests
- Thank you postcards
- WFCO inspirational information
- Giving packet
- WFCO postcards and stickers



A House Party Kit for up to 10 people is \$100.



### Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, FirstBank

Are you interested in sponsoring our Annual Luncheon, the state's most inspiring gathering to benefit Colorado women and girls? Demonstrate your community leadership like FirstBank by supporting our renowned community showcase of icons, ideas, and stories.

### Join our Annual Luncheon Committee

**Elizabeth Dahill** and **Luella D'Angelo Chavez** are the 2022 Annual Luncheon co-chairs and lead the luncheon committee. Elizabeth has been a committee member for five years and Luella has been a member of the Power of Extended Philanthropy (PEP) for four years.

By joining them, you'll support the largest fundraiser in Colorado for women and their families through fundraising, securing in-kind donations, and coordinating event logistics.

We thank our Annual Luncheon honorary chairs for their support making The Women's Foundation of Colorado **Faster, Stronger, Greater!**

Michelle Campbell  
Carly Hare  
Eunice Kim  
Colleen & Paul LaFontaine  
Trish Orman and Jayne Mitchell  
Elaine Torres  
Betsy Wagner  
Elbra Wedgeworth

Contact Kaylyn Fern, development officer, for more information about the luncheon at [kaylynf@wfc.org](mailto:kaylynf@wfc.org).

# FIND YOUR FIT: OUR COMMUNITIES OF GIVING

“Catalyzing community” is in our DNA. Women are the nucleus of our families, communities, and economy. Yet only 1.9% of all philanthropic giving in the U.S. goes to organizations that support women and girls. If we want to see our communities thrive, we have to be intentional and tenacious about investing in them. WFCO communities of giving are at the heart of this intentionality. *Which community of giving is right for you?*

## EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL

WFCO Empowerment Council (EC) members are dedicated to building their philanthropy, creating relationships, and furthering their personal and professional growth. 2022 activities have included volunteering to donate essentials for women and children impacted by the Marshall Fire, learning how to invest, as well as connecting through yoga and brunch. EC members pledge \$500 annually, which provides exclusive benefits:

- Priority access to young professional tickets to our Annual Luncheon
- Tailored educational, leadership, and professional development events
- Volunteer leadership opportunities with The Foundation
- Our quarterly insider newsletter, *Movement Maker*
- Name recognition in WFCO materials

Join our April EC event, *Navigating Power Dynamics to Create Career Success*, featuring author, coach, sales guru, and mother, Lori Cornetta. Thursday, April 21, at 5 p.m. in WFCO’s Garden Room and patio.



**MEET KAYLYN FERN**  
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Joining The Foundation in 2021 from Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence, Kaylyn works directly with EC and manages the Annual Luncheon, annual campaign, and Colorado Gives Day. Her personal mission statement: *“If not you, then who? Social change is our collective responsibility. Everyone should be invested in making the world a better place for EVERYONE who lives in it.”* Interested in learning more? Please contact [kaylynf@wfc.org](mailto:kaylynf@wfc.org).

## POWER OF EXTENDED PHILANTHROPY

Power of Extended Philanthropy (PEP) members are a group of passionate and diverse individuals collectively committed to making Colorado a place where all women and girls thrive. Their inspired generosity of \$1,000 or more annually for three years creates a philanthropic force that powers WFCO’s mission. Their membership includes:

- Two premier tickets to the Annual Luncheon and discounted tables
- Tailored educational events and networking/social gatherings
- Our quarterly insider newsletter, *Movement Maker*
- Name recognition in WFCO materials

Pearl PEP members, who pledge \$3,000 or more annually for three years, are a special group of PEPs. Their extraordinary generosity is a testimony to their commitment to equity for all Colorado women and girls. We give special recognition to this group of philanthropists along with a special Pearl PEP lapel pin.



**MEET MAGGIE STOOT**  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Maggie joined The Women’s Foundation in 2022 from Florence Crittenton Services and oversees PEP and Women Will. Her personal mission statement: *“As a new mom, I want to nurture a sense of philanthropic responsibility and civic engagement in my children and within my family.”* Contact Maggie Stoot at [maggies@wfc.org](mailto:maggies@wfc.org) for more information and to join PEP today.



## WOMEN WILL BUILD A LEGACY

Bequests ensure our tenacity for future generations. This year, we are opening a commemorative library honoring our generous Women Will legacy donors. Because books live on forever, we want to express our gratitude to legacy donors by showcasing their favorites. The Women Will library at WFCO will be a space that honors donors who believe in the importance of WFCO’s longevity and the future of Colorado women and girls.

Women Will members will select their favorite book celebrating women – fiction or nonfiction – to add to the library and sign their names into the commemorative Women Will catalog. The legacy of Women Will donors will live at The Women’s Foundation of Colorado through the stories of female strength, resiliency, and power. As this curated collection grows, we will digitize this special book list making it readily available for anyone to browse the titles. Contact [maggies@wfc.org](mailto:maggies@wfc.org) to learn about legacy giving. You may name WFCO as the beneficiary of real property, marketable securities, qualified retirement plans, IRA accounts, or life insurance policies.



# CHANGING SYSTEMS, CHANGING LIVES: A LOOK AT THE 2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Testifying on behalf of HB22-1055.  
WFCO leads the Don't Tax Dignity Coalition.  
*Left to right: Esther Turcios, Colorado Fiscal Institute;  
Rep. Leslie Herod, bill sponsor; Rep. Susan Lontine, bill sponsor;  
Alison Friedman Phillips, WFCO director of programs.*

Through a nonpartisan approach to public policy, The Women's Foundation of Colorado and our public policy committee identified three priority bills for the 2022 legislative session, for which we use lobbying resources. We also are supporting a dozen more that support gender, racial, and economic equity by doing the following:

- Making work work for women
- Increasing women's access to basic needs
- Ensuring that women statewide have access to the full range of reproductive health information, care, and justice.

## HB22-1010 Early Childhood Educator Income Tax Credit

This bill would accomplish two things: Strengthen our early care and education (ECE) workforce and women's economic security. Given the value of their essential work in preparing children for school and enabling their parents to go to work, ECE workers are poorly compensated.

On average, ECE teachers earn less than half the salary of kindergarten teachers and over one-third report receiving subsidies from public assistance programs to make ends meet. Low pay and instability in the early childhood sector contribute to high turnover rates with half of all ECE professionals changing jobs within three years, which further contributes to instability in the sector.

## HB22-1055 Sales Tax Exemption Essential Hygiene Products

Every Coloradan deserves to live with dignity. Far too many are unable to pay for essential needs including period products, infant diapers, or adult incontinence products. With this bill, Colorado can take the first step toward changing that by ensuring essential products aren't taxed.

Treating these items as essential could help millions of Coloradans, including the more than 202,000 children under 3 years of age and their families, the 1.6 million girls and women between the ages of 12 and 55, and some of the 850,000 who are 65 or older. As of April 6, 2022, this bill had passed the Senate Finance Committee with unanimous, bipartisan support.

## HB22-1259 Modifications to Colorado Works Program

This bill will make several meaningful reforms to Colorado Works/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The TANF statute has not been meaningfully updated in roughly 15 years. Basic cash assistance (BCA) payments have not kept up with inflation or the high cost of living in Colorado, and are worth far less today than they were in 1996 when the program began -- at only \$508 per month for a family of three.

Visit [wfc.org](http://wfc.org) to see the complete list of bills we've taken positions on - including the Reproductive Health Equity Act and a bill to establish an office of a liaison for the relatives of missing and murdered Indigenous people. The Reproductive Health Equity Act was signed into law by Gov. Jared Polis on April 4, 2022. It safeguards reproductive rights in Colorado, including abortion.

» Register at [wfc.org](http://wfc.org) for our Colorado Ambassador Network quarterly meeting on June 10 for a legislative session overview.

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW? A LOOK AT PAST BILLS WE SUPPORTED

## Equal Pay for Equal Work Act

WFCO not only advocated for its passage, we co-hosted educational webinars with the Colorado Women’s Bar Association to help the community understand its impact and prepare for implementation in 2021. Employees and jobseekers praise the law for features such as requirements to include pay ranges on job postings and other states and municipalities across the country follow Colorado’s lead in requiring pay transparency. Employers are still adjusting to the changes. We remain committed to ensuring the Colorado Equal Pay for Equal Work Act is workable for employees, jobseekers, and employers alike and to supporting equal pay efforts beyond Colorado.

## Paid Family & Medical Leave

Voters passed Proposition 118, the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program, on the 2020 statewide ballot. The program is an investment in all Colorado employees to be able to access this resource when they need it most. Premiums will start being collected in 2023 and benefits will be available to workers beginning in 2024. WFCO remains part of the FAML I Coalition, led by 9to5 Colorado and Colorado Fiscal Institute (both are WFCO grantees), to ensure equity is at the center of the process. In the 2022 legislative session, we’re supporting a financing bill that will help the program prepare to launch. In advance of the program launch, WFCO is proud to have updated our own policies to offer our staff 12 weeks of fully paid family and medical leave.

## Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Voters said yes on the 2020 statewide ballot to taxing nicotine products to fund universal free preschool for 4-year-olds starting in fall 2023. WFCO is working with many partners to strengthen and retain the early care and education (ECE) workforce to make this law a reality. In 2021, we helped pass a bill that improves retention and educators’ salaries to increase capacity for the sector. We also supported the Anna Jo Garcia Haynes Early Education Act to create a Department of Early Childhood at the state level. This session, we are advocating for a refundable tax credit for early childhood educators.

## WFCO GRANTEE CHIC ELEVATES MENTAL HEALTH IN JOB PLACEMENT PROGRAM

31-year-old Ashley turned a difficult situation into an opportunity. Ashley was among the 12.2 million women who lost their jobs in March and April 2020. She also was battling postpartum depression after the birth of her second child. When her aunt told her about a paid pre-apprenticeship program through Collaborative Healing Initiative within Communities (CHIC), she didn’t hesitate. CHIC is a WINcome grant recipient.

*“I thought, this will be something that gives me purpose to get up in the morning as well as getting me back into the work world,” Ashley said.*

In addition to the professional development she would gain for a future career in construction, Ashley was drawn to CHIC’s focus on self-discovery and healing. “If you aren’t being true to yourself you can’t show up as the best version of yourself. The check was just like a bonus to what I took away from CHIC.”

According to the CDC, postpartum depression affects one in eight new mothers. The risk is significantly higher for new mothers of color. Notably, while Black women are more likely to have PPD, they are less likely to receive help. As reported in *Psychiatric Times*, recent data show that stigma is not the main reason that Black women do not seek help for depression. Instead, their willingness to seek care often depends on their prior experiences with mental health treatment.

As part of working with CHIC, women participate in group sessions and receive up to four individual sessions with a therapist who is relatable and culturally sensitive. The experience convinced Ashley to “get out there and access the help available.”

The focus on well-being is what Hilari Smith, co-founder and COO of CHIC, believes separates CHIC from other programs. “In our first few years, as we thought about what supports that women need, mental health was a part of it. But now it’s a core component of the program. We are still focused on career development, but what we’ve learned is that we must address how we are dealing with our traumas.”

Ashley earned her certification in OSHA compliance and operating a forklift. These certifications prepare her for a variety of positions within construction and she continues to see a therapist. “Therapy is a good thing. I’ve been doing a lot better because of it.”



Ashley, at home with her youngest son, is grateful for the mental health support she received from WFCO grantee, CHIC.

# FOR THAI NGUYEN, FOUNDER OF KAIZEN FOOD RESCUE, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IS A PART OF HER OWN HEALING JOURNEY



On a sunny winter morning in Englewood, Latina mothers, grandparents, and essential workers patiently await their turns in their cars for a mobile, no-contact “food pop-up” through Kaizen Food Rescue. All of them drive off with fresh produce and nutrient-dense, culturally relevant food, such as organic kabocha, daikon, jalapenos, and poblano peppers.

In 2021, Kaizen Food Rescue, a Women & Girls of Color Fund grantee, redistributed nearly 5 million pounds of food and more than 32,000 kids’ meals to communities facing food insecurity. Founded by Thai Nguyen, a mom of three and former product designer and event manager, food sovereignty is as much a part of her own healing journey as it is for those communities.

Before settling in the U.S., her family experienced the realities of food insecurity at refugee camps in four separate countries. They experienced it again in America after Hurricane Andrew. Though she finds it inconceivable that U.S. businesses spend \$408 billion a year growing, transporting, processing, etc. food that is never even consumed, it lit a fire within her.

## From a free food table to 250 mobile food pop-ups per year

In 2019 she and other parents at her children’s school created a free food table for other families, almost half of whom were previously on a federal lunch program, but the school was new and not yet part of the program.

In 2020, the pandemic was an accelerant for Thai as food access became more limited. Hunger Free Colorado found that over 50% of BIPOC individuals were food insecure and food insecurity as a whole tripled due to COVID-19. She officially started Kaizen Food Rescue to prevent food waste and improve food justice and health equity in the Denver metro area.

“There’s a host of social and economic issues around who has access to fresh food and it boils down to classism and systemic racism,” said Thai.

In 2022, Kaizen Food Rescue has expanded its ecosystem to include 20 distributors and suppliers, 20+ volunteers, and more than 250 mobile food pop-up events each year. It also includes a youth-nurtured and BIPOC-led community garden.

“I really love working with kids,” said Thai. “Seeing them learn about our local food system and trying new, nutritionally dense foods brings me joy.”

## Bringing more than food to communities

Obtaining food is a laborious process, especially for those who don’t speak English, noted Thai. She continually retools what the pop-ups offer as she surveys recipients about resources they need.

“I went through the process of applying for SNAP and it was appalling. We now have community navigators – promotoras – Latinx community leaders who have been trained through programs to navigate the system to help others.”

In addition to resources such as diapers, Kaizen Food Rescue has distributed PPE and provided COVID testing sites and even voter registration.

Other organizations took notice. They saw the culturally relevant work that Kaizen Food Rescue was doing in communities and wanted to bring it to their constituents. Jefferson County made a \$312,000 grant to Kaizen Food Rescue to get healthy food out to residents in 2020. Food Bank of the Rockies, Kaizen’s largest food supplier, worked with Kaizen Food Rescue to create an action plan on how to better serve communities of color.

## A flagship store at Loretto Heights

Kaizen Food Rescue’s next endeavor is under construction. It is partnering with *Común* to build a 2,100+ square-foot food hub and community farmer’s market in Loretto Heights, a community center and an affordable housing historic redevelopment project in Denver. This will be considered its flagship store, even as it continues food pop-ups throughout the metro area.

All will be funded by grants, foundations, and individual donations.

## What is Food Sovereignty?

*“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.”*

– Declaration of Nyéléni, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007





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