

First Regular Session
Seventy-fourth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 23-0718.01 Shelby Ross x4510

HOUSE BILL 23-1124

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Lindsay,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Fields,

House Committees
Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE CONTINUATION OF FUNDING FOR SUPPORTIVE**
102 **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR COLORADO EMPLOYMENT FIRST**
103 **PARTICIPANTS, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN**
104 **APPROPRIATION.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill requires the general assembly to annually appropriate \$1.5 million from the general fund to the department of human services for continued employment support and job retention services and to continue

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

to support work-based learning opportunities for Colorado employment first participants.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 26-2-308, **amend** (1),
3 (4), and (5) as follows:

4 **26-2-308. Colorado employment first - supplemental nutrition
5 assistance program - federal match - legislative declaration -
6 definition - repeal.** (1) (a) The general assembly finds that:

7 (I) The COVID-19 pandemic that spread through Colorado
8 beginning in February 2020 has led to extensive job loss throughout the
9 state;

10 (II) Persistent unemployment and loss of income as a result of the
11 COVID-19 pandemic has led many Coloradans to rely on critical public
12 assistance benefits, such as the supplemental nutrition assistance program,
13 which helps struggling families pay for food;

14 (III) In addition to providing essential emergency food assistance
15 for Coloradans and their families, the supplemental nutrition assistance
16 program also includes resources dedicated to employment, education, and
17 training services, known as the Colorado employment first program; and

18 (IV) The Colorado employment first program promotes long-term
19 self-sufficiency and independence by preparing supplemental nutrition
20 assistance program participants for meaningful employment through
21 work-related education and training activities.

22 (b) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FURTHER FINDS THAT:

23 (I) ALTHOUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS WINDING DOWN IN
24 2023, THE WORKFORCE CRISIS IS NOT OVER;

25 (II) COLORADO EMPLOYMENT FIRST PROGRAM OPERATORS

1 REPORTED THAT LOCAL FUNDING ALONE COULD NOT SUPPORT THE
2 PROGRAM'S PRIORITY POPULATIONS AND THE HIGH-COST SUPPORT
3 SERVICES PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS NEED TO BECOME JOB-READY. AS A
4 RESULT, PROGRAM OPERATORS ANTICIPATE A DECREASE IN BOTH
5 CASELOAD AND SUPPORT SERVICES.

6 (III) COLORADO MUST HELP COLORADO EMPLOYMENT FIRST
7 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF THE
8 PANDEMIC;

9 (IV) COLORADO'S MINDSET AND FOCUS MUST SHIFT TOWARD
10 CONTINUED FUNDING TO SUPPORT NOT ONLY CRISIS NEEDS, SUCH AS RENT
11 AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE, BUT ALSO TO SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS IN
12 GAINING MEANINGFUL TRAINING, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND TUITION FOR
13 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TO HELP WITH COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH
14 SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF SECONDARY OR POST-SECONDARY
15 EDUCATION PROGRAMS, AND TO ENABLE LOCAL COUNTY DEPARTMENTS
16 AND ANY THIRD-PARTY PARTNERS TO EXPAND ACROSS THE STATE,
17 INCLUDING INTO RURAL COUNTIES; AND

18 (V) CONTINUED FUNDING WOULD HELP COLORADO EMPLOYMENT
19 FIRST PROGRAM OPERATORS EXPAND SERVICES TO PRIORITY POPULATIONS
20 SUCH AS SINGLE PARENTS, STUDENTS, INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING
21 HOMELESSNESS, INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE
22 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND THOSE WHO ARE UNDEREMPLOYED, TO
23 MOVE PARTICIPANTS BEYOND MINIMUM WAGE JOBS AND INTO TRADES AND
24 BETTER-PAYING POSITIONS.

25 (b) (c) Therefore, the general assembly declares that investing
26 CONTINUING TO INVEST state dollars into the Colorado employment first
27 program will enhance the program's ability to help supplemental nutrition

1 assistance program participants achieve economic self-sufficiency by
2 drawing down a fifty percent federal match for the supplemental nutrition
3 assistance program, which is a flexible source of support for workforce
4 development services.

5 (4) For the ~~2020-21~~ **2023-24** state fiscal year AND EACH STATE
6 FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, the general assembly shall ANNUALLY
7 appropriate ~~three million~~ ONE MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND dollars
8 from the general fund to the state department for the purposes described
9 in subsection (3) of this section. If any unexpended or unencumbered
10 money appropriated for ~~the~~ EACH fiscal year remains at the end of the
11 fiscal year, the state department may expend the money IN THE NEXT
12 FISCAL YEAR for the same purposes without further appropriation.

13 (5) This section is repealed, effective ~~July 1, 2024~~ JULY 1, 2025.

14 **SECTION 2. Safety clause.** The general assembly hereby finds,
15 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
16 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.