

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
BEFORE THE HOUSE HEALTH & INSURANCE COMMITTEE
ON HB 21-1232: COLORADO HEALTH INSURANCE OPTION**

**April 9, 2021
Sarita Parikh, Owner
glow + gather**

Thank you Chairwoman Lontine, Vice Chairwoman Caraveo, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sarita Parikh and I am the co-founder of glow+gather, a Colorado lifestyle brand that manufactures and sells high-quality spices and spa products. We are located in Castle Rock, Colorado. I also own a physical therapy private practice. Thank you for allowing me to be here today to talk about why it's important to pass HB 21-1232, a lifesaving measure for Colorado small business owners like me who are struggling to keep up with the increasing cost of healthcare.

As a small business owner, a healthcare professional, and someone with a pre-existing condition, I am deeply concerned about the rising costs of quality healthcare, and I know I am not alone in this. In the last 16 years I've owned my physical therapy practice, I have not only seen my premiums get more expensive with each passing year, but deductibles have steadily increased as well. Even with a pre-existing condition requiring regular specialists' visits, I have only met my deductible *twice* during this period. Having a pre-existing condition makes it all the more difficult to keep my medical bills low, and every month I have to set aside a large percentage of my income to pay for prescription drugs and neurological examinations.

When I try to shop on the health insurance market, the costs to get in front of a specialist are still high, if not higher than what I currently have. Having high premiums and deductibles means that I am paying for everything out-of-pocket, and I simply cannot afford to continue to do so.

I'm not just here to talk about the challenges I face when accessing healthcare; I am also here for the countless families I have seen in my practice. These families are stuck between a rock and a hard place—they are drowning in medical bills, and they can't forgo healthcare when their children have special needs or they are seeking care for themselves so they can continue to go to work and put food on their dinner table. They, too, struggle with high premiums, deductibles, and out of pocket expenses. Having to choose between their child's health, their health, or the livelihood of their family is simply unacceptable.

These are the reasons why I am here to express my support for the Colorado Health Insurance Option, which would create an opportunity for the healthcare industry to work together and reduce the costs of care in our state. Small businesses and Coloradans alike deserve greater access to quality and affordable healthcare.

The Colorado Health Insurance Option also makes good business sense. It will expand options, lower costs, and provide greater access to quality, affordable coverage that my business and my clients desperately need. This will ultimately improve public health in Colorado, and in turn, our economy.

I urge you to consider passing this legislation for the sake of our communities that are struggling to make ends meet, including our hard-hit small business community. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Sarita Parikh