

Reasonable Independence For Children

In 2022, the Colorado legislature unanimously passed, and the governor signed, House Bill 1090, “Reasonable Independence For Children,” also known as the “free-range parenting” bill. It states,

A child is not neglected when allowed to participate in independent activities that a reasonable and prudent parent, guardian, or legal custodian would consider safe given the child’s maturity, condition, and abilities, including but not limited to activities such as: (i) traveling to and from school, including walking, running, bicycling, or other similar mode of travel; (ii) traveling to and from nearby commercial or recreational facilities; (iii) engaging in outdoor play; and (iv) remaining in a home or other location that a reasonable and prudent parent, guardian, or legal custodian would consider safe for the child.¹

Legislative Intent

“Just because a kid is playing alone outside, it doesn’t mean they’re in danger.” “We certainly don’t want parents getting in trouble because their kids were playing on the playground.”

—Governor Jared Polis, March 30, 2022, upon signing HB22-1090^{2, 3}

“We’re working diligently to foster everyday independence for Colorado’s youth and this bill is a wonderful step in the right direction. This bill makes it clear that there is no need to get the authorities involved when kids are out and about in their neighborhood, walking to school or playing on the playground. When youth are given independence they grow, learn and thrive and we’re pleased to pass legislation that empowers their right to independence.”

—State Representative Mary Young, sponsor of HB22-1090⁴

“This bill gives freedom to parents and it gives freedom to families. It reminds me of the way it used to be when I was a young girl, when I was allowed to go to the store and allowed to ride my bike to certain activities.”

—State Senator Janet Buckner, sponsor of HB22-1090²

“When we were young . . . we were given the freedom and responsibility to be outside alone or with friends, riding bikes, climbing trees, playing games and eating candy. . . . Now we are co-sponsoring Colorado Bill 1090 to make sure today’s children get the same kind of freedom, when their parents believe they’re ready for it. . . . No one wants to risk an investigation for an everyday parenting decision. . . . [Bill 1090] not only helps parents understand their rights, it also helps the authorities know when they don’t have to open an investigation. . . . It allows Colorado’s children to start building the bravery, maturity, curiosity, responsibility, and problem-solving skills most of us adults got when we were allowed to be part of the world. That unsupervised time wasn’t wasted—it made us strong.”

—State Senator Jim Smallwood and State Representative Mary Young, sponsors of HB22-1090⁵

¹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1090>

² https://www.coloradopolitics.com/legislature/gov-jared-polis-signs-reasonable-independence-for-children-into-law/article_3579fe7a-b066-11ec-8f97-13254b436633.html

³ <https://letgrow.org/colorado-signs-law/>

⁴ <https://www.cohousedems.com/reasonable-independence-for-children-bill-passed-house/>

⁵ <https://www.greeleytribune.com/2022/02/20/sen-jim-smallwood-rep-mary-young-making-sure-its-legal-for-kids-to-play-outside/>