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The fourth week of the 2018 legislative session saw an increase in momentum, as major bills introduced early in the session had their first hearing or were scheduled to be heard very soon.

For example, earlier in the session, legislators introduced a package of bills in attempt to address the opioid crisis which has impacted both Denver and rural Colorado, as it has the rest of the U.S. The package of bills came from the work done this summer by the Opioid and Other Substance Abuse Interim Committee, consisting of representatives and senators from both sides of the aisle. Members of the committee spent their summer listening to presentations from the healthcare community, non-profit sector, local governments and law enforcement. There are a couple of important bills that came out of the committee this summer which are scheduled for their first committee of reference hearing next week. SB18-022—Clinical Practice for Opioid Prescribing—by Senators Aguilar and Tate, would limit the number of opioid pills a patient can be prescribed to an initial 7-day supply and a 7-day supply refill. There are some exceptions to the 7-day supply limit, such as for patients who experience chronic pain, those with cancer, hospice care, certain post-surgical situations and those receiving medical-assisted treatment for substance use disorder. The goal is to strike a balance to prevent over-prescribing of opioids without taking away a patient's supply too early, so they don't turn to heroin, which has been the case for many addicts.

Another bill which came from the Opioid Interim Committee is SB18-040—Substance Use Disorder Harm Reduction—by Senators Jahn and Lambert, which, if passed, would make Colorado one of the first states to pilot safe injection sites for those using drugs. The bill would provide civil and criminal immunity for the facility in the city and county of Denver. This has become a big policy debate at the Capitol. For those who work closely with addicts, this is seen as a step toward reducing overdose deaths, by providing users with clean needles and getting them out of the streets, into a place where they can access resources to get them clean. However, some legislators have difficulty facilitating the use of illegal drugs like heroin. It will be a tough battle for the sponsors, as the bill has been assigned to the Senate State Affairs committee by the Majority Leader—known as the “kill committee”—because it has a majority of Republicans needed to kill a bill.

The Joint Budget Committee finalized their supplemental—mid-year adjustments—package this week. The committee had a contentious evening on Tuesday as they couldn't agree on how to distribute the extra \$97 million that came from an increase in local property taxes collected for K12 education funding. The committee decided to use \$7 million from the \$97 million to hold the per pupil funding constant. Democratic members of the committee wanted to distribute the rest of the money to the school districts, however Republicans wanted to put the money into the General Fund for other budget shortfalls. The committee could not agree on a decision, so the money defaulted into the Public School Fund. The supplemental package could still be amended

on the floor next week, if the General Assembly wants to provide additional dollars to school districts this fiscal year.