WHEREAS, In 2000, the voters of the state approved an amendment to the Colorado Constitution adding the senior homestead exemption, which provides property tax relief for qualifying senior citizens and their surviving spouses; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, Colorado voters expanded the exemption to include disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, As home values have risen and property taxes increased, it has become increasingly difficult for seniors and disabled veterans to pay their property taxes, particularly for those with limited and fixed incomes; and

WHEREAS, The senior homestead exemption is therefore critical for many seniors and disabled veterans, as it allows them to pay reduced property taxes and to stay in their homes; and

WHEREAS, The public health emergency related to COVID-19
has caused a severe decrease in the state’s general fund for fiscal year 2020-21 and beyond, and the General Assembly is faced with making difficult financial decisions on behalf of the people of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, Seniors are at a higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19, and, therefore, many seniors may choose to isolate for longer periods of time, which in turn deprives them of opportunities to earn income and makes it more difficult for them to make property tax payments; and

WHEREAS, In tough times such as these, it is imperative that the state budget reflect the true priorities of the people of Colorado, and protecting our seniors and our disabled veterans is of paramount importance; and

WHEREAS, The 2020 Long Bill was part of a balanced budget insofar as it was based on an assumption that there would be an additional $260 million of general fund made available either through bills that reduce general fund obligations or increase the amount of the general fund available for appropriation; and

WHEREAS, One budget-balancing proposal to reduce general fund obligations that the joint budget committee considered was a proposal to suspend the homestead exemption for seniors and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, In order to preserve the senior homestead exemption, numerous amendments to the 2020 Long Bill were offered in the House of Representatives to decrease the general fund appropriations in an amount that would reserve the necessary funds to protect the exemption as enshrined in the Colorado Constitution; and

WHEREAS, The general fund reductions in amendments J.001, J.003, J.005, J.017, J.019, J.022, J.025, J.035, J.039, J.045, J.057, J.062, J.063, J.065, and J.070 to multiple departments for various programs would have reduced general fund expenditures by nearly $600 million; and

WHEREAS, Adopting some or all of these amendments would have provided ample revenue to guarantee that it would be unnecessary to suspend the senior homestead exemption to balance the budget; and
WHEREAS, Those amendments were struck down, leaving the senior homestead exemption on the potential chopping block, which could make our state's seniors and veterans vulnerable to financial hardship; and

WHEREAS, Despite the failure to adopt these amendments to the 2020 Long Bill, it is important to acknowledge the significance of and to commit to the preservation of the senior homestead exemption, as it was and is the will of the people of the state of Colorado to offer such a critical program to our seniors and disabled veterans; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-second General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

That we, the members of the Colorado House of Representatives, recognize the importance of the senior homestead exemption and its direct benefit to our state's seniors and disabled veterans, who deserve protection from financial hardship and who are vulnerable to both the health and financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Resolution be sent to the Colorado Senate.