

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fourth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

PREAMENDED

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 23-0546.03 Michael Dohr x4347

HOUSE BILL 23-1237

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Velasco,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Will,

State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs
Appropriations

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE ACCESS IN LOCAL EMERGENCY**
102 **SITUATIONS, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN**
103 **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 division of homeland security and emergency management in the department of public safety (division) to conduct a study of what municipalities, sheriff's offices, counties, fire districts, and local 911 agencies need to be able to provide emergency alerts in a minority language and what local 911 agencies need to provide live

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.

interpretation during a 911 call. The division shall present the study to the judiciary committees of the house of representatives and senate, or to any successor committees, during the committees' "SMART Act" hearings held during the 2024 session of the general assembly.

Beginning January 1, 2026, the bill requires an evacuation alert and other public safety alerts sent by a county or municipality to be sent by text via a reverse 911 text. In addition to being in English, the alert must also be in a minority language if:

- The county or municipality has at least 2,000 residents who are 18 years of age or older and who speak English less than very well, as defined by the United States bureau of the census American community survey or comparable census data, and who speak a shared minority language at home; or
- At least 2.5% of residents in the county or municipality who are 18 years of age or older speak English less than very well, as defined by the United States bureau of the census American community survey or comparable census data, and speak a shared minority language at home.

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

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds and declares that:

4 (a) Multi-hazard early warning systems are a cost-effective
5 emergency and disaster risk reduction measure that have resulted in
6 saving peoples' lives, reducing disruptions, reducing property losses, and
7 minimizing economic losses;

8 (b) In recent years, Colorado has experienced extremely
9 destructive wildfires, and it is in the interest of the state of Colorado to be
10 proactive in building resilient communities;

11 (c) Multi-hazard early warning systems provide a good return on
12 investment. The 2019 Global Commission on Adaptation report, "Adapt
13 Now", found early warning systems provide a more than tenfold return on
14 investment;

1 (d) Multi-hazard early warning systems are only as strong as their
2 weakest link, and one break or delay in information transfer, such as the
3 failure to communicate warnings in inclusive languages, may derail the
4 entire effort;

5 (e) Colorado is a diverse state where over 40 languages are
6 spoken, per the most recent census data, and diversity is one of its
7 strengths; and

8 (f) Early warning systems and dissemination alerts need to reach
9 and better support at-risk communities in a time- and language-sensitive
10 manner and focus on the last-mile outreach using a mix of communication
11 channels. Collecting information about the state's emergency response
12 systems can inform future legislation to improve public safety.

13 (2) Therefore, the general assembly determines that it is in the best
14 interests of the people of the state of Colorado to update the state's
15 emergency alert systems to ensure the systems are able to reach people in
16 multiple languages and to work together to proactively address
17 emergency response for future disasters.

18 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 23-20-145 as
19 follows:

20 **23-20-145. Language access emergency alert study -**
21 **definitions - repeal.** (1) (a) THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO'S NATURAL
22 HAZARDS CENTER SHALL CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHAT
23 MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL
24 911 AGENCIES NEED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY ALERTS IN
25 MINORITY LANGUAGES BY JULY 1, 2024, AND WHAT LOCAL 911 AGENCIES
26 NEED IN ORDER TO PROVIDE LIVE INTERPRETATION DURING A 911 CALL BY
27 JULY 1, 2024. THE CENTER SHALL CONSULT WITH THE DIVISION OF

1 HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE
2 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES,
3 COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCIES IN CONDUCTING THE
4 STUDY AND ALLOW PUBLIC INPUT.

5 (b) THE STUDY MUST:

6 (I) IDENTIFY THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF MULTI-HAZARD
7 EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO EASILY AND
8 SUCCESSFULLY REACH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WITHOUT HAVING TO OPT
9 IN, AS WELL AS OPT-IN OPTIONS, OUTPUTS FOR EMERGENCY ALERT
10 SYSTEMS AND MESSAGES, AND THE ABILITY TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY
11 ALERTS BY USING TRANSLATIONS IN MINORITY LANGUAGES;

12 (II) SURVEY STATE AGENCIES, COUNTIES, MUNICIPALITIES,
13 SHERIFF'S OFFICES, FIRE DISTRICTS, FIRE AUTHORITIES, AND LOCAL 911
14 AGENCIES TO IDENTIFY THE CURRENT CAPABILITIES OF EXISTING
15 EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEMS USED IN COLORADO AND COMPARE THEM TO
16 THE IDENTIFIED ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS;

17 (III) IDENTIFY GAPS IN THE CAPABILITIES OF EXISTING EMERGENCY
18 ALERT SYSTEMS REQUIRING CORRECTION;

19 (IV) IDENTIFY RESOURCES, INCLUDING FEDERAL FUNDING
20 OPPORTUNITIES, TO IMPLEMENT A GRANT PROGRAM TO ASSIST
21 MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL
22 911 AGENCIES IN OBTAINING EMERGENCY RESPONSE TECHNOLOGY
23 SYSTEMS THAT CAN PROVIDE EMERGENCY ALERTS IN MINORITY
24 LANGUAGES;

25 (V) DETERMINE BEST PRACTICES, WHICH MAY BE IDENTIFIED BY
26 REVIEWING PROGRAMS IN OTHER STATES, FOR HIRING MULTILINGUAL AND
27 MULTICULTURAL STAFF;

1 (VI) DETERMINE BEST PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING LOCAL
2 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITH CONNECTIONS TO POPULATIONS THAT
3 SPEAK A MINORITY LANGUAGE; AND

4 (VII) PRESENT RESEARCH REGARDING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY
5 ALERTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AFTER CONSULTATION WITH A
6 STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION THAT ADVOCATES FOR PEOPLE WITH
7 DISABILITIES.

8 (c) THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO'S NATURAL HAZARD CENTER
9 SHALL SUBMIT ITS STUDY REPORT TO THE DIVISION OF HOMELAND
10 SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
11 SAFETY AND TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY NOVEMBER 1, 2023.

12 (2) FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION:

13 (a) "INTERPRETATION" MEANS THE SPOKEN CONVERSION OF ONE
14 LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER LANGUAGE.

15 (b) "TRANSLATION" MEANS THE WRITTEN CONVERSION OF ONE
16 LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER LANGUAGE.

17 (3) THIS SECTION IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2024.

18 **SECTION 3. Appropriation.** For the 2023-24 state fiscal year,
19 \$61,607 is appropriated to the department of higher education. This
20 appropriation is from the general fund. To implement this act, the
21 department may use this appropriation as follows:

22 (a) \$50,000 for the regents of the university of Colorado for
23 allocation to the natural hazards center; and

24 (c) \$11,607 for need based grants.

25 **SECTION 4. Safety clause.** The general assembly hereby finds,
26 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
27 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.