

CHAPTER 177

EDUCATION - POSTSECONDARY

HOUSE BILL 23-1237

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also SENATOR(S) Will and Exum, Bridges, Cutter, Danielson, Ginal, Gonzales, Hinrichsen, Jaquez Lewis, Kolker, Marchman, Mullica, Priola, Roberts, Rodriguez, Sullivan, Winter F., Fenberg.

AN ACT

CONCERNING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE ACCESS IN LOCAL EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

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

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

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

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

23-20-145. Language access emergency alert study - definitions - repeal.

(1) (a) THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO'S NATURAL HAZARDS CENTER SHALL CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHAT MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCIES NEED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY ALERTS IN MINORITY LANGUAGES BY JULY 1, 2024, AND WHAT LOCAL 911 AGENCIES NEED IN ORDER TO PROVIDE LIVE INTERPRETATION DURING A 911 CALL BY JULY 1, 2024. THE CENTER SHALL CONSULT WITH THE DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCIES IN CONDUCTING THE STUDY AND ALLOW PUBLIC INPUT.

(b) THE STUDY MUST:

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

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

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

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

(V) DETERMINE BEST PRACTICES, WHICH MAY BE IDENTIFIED BY REVIEWING

PROGRAMS IN OTHER STATES, FOR HIRING MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL STAFF;

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

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

(c) THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO'S NATURAL HAZARD CENTER SHALL SUBMIT ITS STUDY REPORT TO THE DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY JANUARY 8, 2024.

(2) FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION:

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

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

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

SECTION 3. Appropriation. For the 2023-24 state fiscal year, \$77,009 is appropriated to the department of higher education. This appropriation is from the general fund. To implement this act, the department may use this appropriation as follows:

(a) \$62,500 for the regents of the university of Colorado for allocation to the natural hazards center; and

(c) \$14,509 for need based grants.

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

Approved: May 12, 2023