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Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

DRAFT
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Bill 3

LLS NO. 25-0183.01 Brita Darling x2241

INTERIM COMMITTEE BILL

Wildfire Matters Review Committee

BILL TOPIC: Forestry & Firefighter Workforce & Education

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN NATURAL RESOURCES,**
102 **AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, SUPPORTING THE COLORADO**
103 **COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE AND OTHER GOVERNMENT**
104 **AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS IN PROVIDING CAREER AWARENESS,**
105 **EDUCATION, AND INTERNSHIPS IN FOREST HEALTH TO YOUTH**
106 **AND YOUNG ADULTS; AUTHORIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF**
107 **PUBLIC SAFETY TO AWARD GRANTS FOR BASIC FIREFIGHTING**
108 **CERTIFICATIONS AND FOR INSTRUCTOR TRAINING AND TO**
109 **DEVELOP A PROGRAM TO TRAIN INSTRUCTORS TO TEACH**
110 **FIREFIGHTING CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS; AND AUTHORIZING THE**
111 **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO DEVELOP AN OUTREACH**
112 **PROGRAM TO PROMOTE FIRE SERVICE CAREERS.**

*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing law.*

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/>.)

Wildfire Matters Review Committee. Section 1 of the bill authorizes the Colorado cooperative extension service (extension) to expand and implement outreach programs and initiatives recommended by the Colorado forest health council for the purpose of increasing awareness of and interest in areas of forestry, wildland fire, and natural resources (forest health) in youth and young adults. The outreach programs and initiatives may be implemented for the 2025-26 state fiscal year through the 2027-28 state fiscal year and may include, in part:

- The expansion of 4-H programs and curricula in forest health;
- Partnerships with the forest health industry, local school districts, higher education institutions, conservation districts, the Colorado state forest service, the division of fire prevention and control in the department of public safety (division), and others to facilitate career and workforce readiness and entry into forest health careers;
- Outreach and support to youth and young adults relating to 2- and 4-year programs and certificates in forest health;
- Industry partnerships and scholarships for forest health certifications, such as wildland fire or chain saw certifications;
- Paid summer natural resources internships focused on forestry for high school students, including the potential to earn high school credit for completing the internship; and
- Paid internships in forest health careers offered by the extension, with mentoring of young adults by the extension, Colorado state university, the Colorado state forest service, and the division.

The bill requires the extension to report annually to the department of natural resources and the house of representatives agriculture, water, and natural resources committee and the senate agriculture and natural resources committee on the implementation and outcomes of the outreach programs and initiatives.

Section 2 authorizes the division to use money in the local firefighter safety and disease prevention fund to:

- Provide need-based grants to fire service governing bodies and volunteer fire departments for the cost of certain

firefighter certification courses, course materials, textbooks, instructors, and written testing and to provide fire instructor I or equivalent certification for instructors who want to participate in a train-the-trainer program created by the division;

- Subject to appropriation by the general assembly, create a train-the-trainer program to ensure that all instructors providing grant-funded certification classes described in the bill teach a consistent curriculum; and
- Subject to appropriation by the general assembly, create a statewide outreach program to promote fire service careers, including marketing materials targeted to youth, an online portal to access career pathways and resources, and marketing materials that include social media.

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

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 23-31-708 as
3 follows:

4 **23-31-708. Forest health youth and young adult outreach and**
5 **education initiative - legislative declaration - definition - reporting.**

6 (1) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES THAT:

7 (a) THE SERVICE SERVES ALL OF COLORADO'S SIXTY-FOUR
8 COUNTIES BY DISSEMINATING RESEARCH-BASED EDUCATION AND
9 INFORMATION ACROSS COLORADO FOR A WIDE NUMBER OF TOPICS AND
10 PROVIDING NONCREDIT PROGRAMMING FOR AUDIENCES RANGING FROM
11 YOUTH TO OLDER ADULTS;

12 (b) THE COLORADO FOREST HEALTH COUNCIL, CREATED IN
13 SECTION 23-31-316, IDENTIFIED THE NEED TO REACH YOUTH AND YOUNG
14 ADULT AUDIENCES WITH EDUCATION AND CAREER SKILLS AND TO PROVIDE
15 WORKFORCE EXPOSURE AND OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUTH AND YOUNG
16 ADULTS; AND

17 (c) DUE TO ITS MISSION, EXPERTISE, AND COOPERATION WITH

1 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, SCHOOL DISTRICTS, COMMUNITY COLLEGES, THE
2 DIVISION OF FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
3 PUBLIC SAFETY, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS COLORADO, AS WELL
4 AS ACROSS THE NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD, THE SERVICE HAS THE
5 ABILITY TO GROW YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND INCREASE CAREER
6 OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AREAS OF FORESTRY, WILDLAND FIRE, AND
7 NATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH THE OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND
8 INITIATIVES DESCRIBED IN THIS SECTION.

9 (2) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE
10 REQUIRES, "4-H" MEANS A COMMUNITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS
11 AMERICA LEARNING LEADERSHIP, CITIZENSHIP, AND LIFE SKILLS
12 SUPPORTED BY NONPROFIT PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDE 4-H PROJECTS AND
13 OTHER OPPORTUNITIES.

14 (3) AS PART OF ITS MISSION, FOR THE 2025-26 STATE FISCAL YEAR
15 THROUGH THE 2027-28 STATE FISCAL YEAR, THE SERVICE MAY CREATE
16 OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES AS DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (4)
17 OF THIS SECTION THAT ARE DESIGNED TO ENGAGE YOUTH AND YOUNG
18 ADULTS IN CAREER EXPLORATION AND TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE
19 AREAS OF FORESTRY, WILDLAND FIRE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES THAT
20 ARE TARGETED TO COUNTIES WITHIN COLORADO, SPECIFICALLY FIVE
21 FRONT RANGE COUNTIES BORDERING THE MOUNTAINS AND FIVE MOUNTAIN
22 REGION COUNTIES.

23 (4) THE OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES MAY INCLUDE:

24 (a) INCREASING AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN NATURAL
25 RESOURCES IN YOUTH RANGING FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE
26 THROUGH 4-H PROGRAMMING IN FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
27 INCLUDING WILDLAND FIRE, AND IN OTHER COMMUNITY SCIENCE

1 OPPORTUNITIES; ADAPTING AND SCALING 4-H CURRICULA FOR USE; AND
2 OFFERING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 4-H SENIOR YOUTH TO EARN COLLEGE
3 CREDIT FOR NATURAL-RESOURCE-RELATED PROJECTS;

4 (b) INCREASING WORKFORCE SKILLS AND CAREER AWARENESS
5 OUTREACH, INCLUDING INCREASING PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE FOREST
6 HEALTH INDUSTRY, LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS, COMMUNITY COLLEGES,
7 THE COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE, THE DIVISION OF FIRE
8 PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY,
9 CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, AND OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES TO
10 FACILITATE CAREER AND WORKFORCE READINESS AND WORKFORCE
11 ENTRY;

12 (c) OUTREACH TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF AND OPTIONS TO
13 OBTAIN TWO-YEAR OR FOUR-YEAR FORESTRY OR NATURAL RESOURCES
14 CERTIFICATES OR DEGREES;

15 (d) INCREASING INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR
16 CERTIFICATIONS, SUCH AS WILDLAND FIRE, CHAIN SAW, AND OTHER
17 CERTIFICATIONS, TO REDUCE FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO OBTAINING
18 WORKFORCE SKILLS;

19 (e) PAID NATURAL RESOURCES SUMMER INTERNSHIPS FOR HIGH
20 SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH AN EMPHASIS ON FORESTRY AND WITH THE
21 POTENTIAL FOR HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT FOR COMPLETING THE INTERNSHIP;

22 (f) PAID INTERNSHIPS, INCLUDING INCREASES IN EXISTING
23 INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THE SERVICE AND THE COLORADO
24 STATE FOREST SERVICE, IN THE FIELDS OF FORESTRY AND NATURAL
25 RESOURCES, WITH MENTORING SUPPORT FROM THE SERVICE, PARTNERING
26 COLLEGES WITHIN COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, THE COLORADO STATE
27 FOREST SERVICE, AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS,

1 SUCH AS THE DIVISION OF FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN THE
2 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY; AND

3 (g) OTHER OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES AS
4 DETERMINED BY THE SERVICE.

5 (5) IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND
6 INITIATIVES PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (4) OF THIS SECTION, THE SERVICE
7 AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS SHALL MINIMIZE
8 BARRIERS TO AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATURAL RESOURCES
9 CAREERS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES.

10 (6) THE SERVICE MAY SEEK, ACCEPT, AND EXPEND GIFTS, GRANTS,
11 OR IN-KIND DONATIONS TO SUPPORT THE OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND
12 INITIATIVES CREATED OR IMPLEMENTED PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION AND
13 MAY LEVERAGE OTHER STATE OR FEDERAL MONEY AVAILABLE FOR THE
14 PURPOSES DESCRIBED IN THIS SECTION.

15 (7) WITH RESPECT TO THE OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES
16 CREATED OR EXPANDED PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION, COLORADO STATE
17 UNIVERSITY'S INDIRECT ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS FOR OFF-CAMPUS
18 PROGRAMS, IF ANY, MUST NOT EXCEED TEN PERCENT OF THE COSTS
19 DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO AND APPROPRIATED FOR THE OUTREACH
20 PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES.

21 (8) (a) ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2026, ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER
22 1, 2027, AND ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2028, THE SERVICE SHALL
23 SUBMIT AN ANNUAL WRITTEN REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL
24 RESOURCES AND TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AGRICULTURE,
25 WATER, AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE AND THE SENATE
26 AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, OR THEIR
27 SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES, CONCERNING OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND

1 INITIATIVES CREATED PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION.

2 (b) THE REPORT MUST INCLUDE, AS APPLICABLE:

3 (I) AN EVALUATION OF EACH OUTREACH PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE,
4 INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAM OR
5 INITIATIVE AND THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE ON THE
6 GOALS DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTIONS (3), (4), AND (5) OF THIS SECTION;

7 (II) THE AMOUNT AND SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR EACH OUTREACH
8 PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE;

9 (III) WHETHER EACH OUTREACH PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE SHOULD
10 BE CONTINUED OR WHETHER A MORE EFFECTIVE PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE
11 IS RECOMMENDED; AND

12 (IV) ANY OTHER INFORMATION RELATING TO THE
13 IMPLEMENTATION OR EFFICACY OF EACH OUTREACH PROGRAM OR
14 INITIATIVE.

15 (c) NOTWITHSTANDING SECTION 24-1-136 (11)(a)(I), THE
16 REPORTING REQUIRED PURSUANT TO THIS SUBSECTION (8) CONTINUES FOR
17 THE DURATION OF THE OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES.

18 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 24-33.5-1231,
19 **amend** (2)(a)(I)(A); and **add** (2)(a)(I)(C), (2)(a)(I)(D), and (5.5) as
20 follows:

21 **24-33.5-1231. Local firefighter safety and disease prevention**
22 **fund - creation - grants - rules - report - repeal.** (2) (a) The division
23 shall use the money in the fund to:

24 (I) Award need-based grants to governing bodies and volunteer
25 fire departments to provide funding or reimbursement for:

26 (A) Purchasing equipment or replacing damaged or obsolete
27 equipment, including the costs of disposal of damaged and obsolete

1 equipment; and

2 (C) FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION COURSES, INCLUDING, AS
3 DETERMINED BY THE DIVISION, THE COST OF TEXTBOOKS, COURSE
4 MATERIALS, INSTRUCTORS, AND WRITTEN TESTING FOR BASIC FIREFIGHTER,
5 FIREFIGHTER I, HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AWARENESS AND OPERATIONS,
6 AND BASIC WILDLAND FIRE TRAINING COURSES, TO ENSURE THAT ALL
7 FIREFIGHTERS IN COLORADO HAVE ACCESS TO BASIC FIREFIGHTER
8 TRAINING; AND

9 (D) FIRE INSTRUCTOR I CERTIFICATION FOR INDIVIDUALS
10 INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE TRAIN-THE-TRAINER PROGRAM
11 CREATED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (5.5)(a) OF THIS SECTION; AND

12 (5.5) SUBJECT TO AVAILABLE APPROPRIATIONS BY THE GENERAL
13 ASSEMBLY, THE DIVISION SHALL:

14 (a) CREATE A TRAIN-THE-TRAINER PROGRAM TO LEVERAGE
15 EXISTING TRAINING RESOURCES WITHIN THE FIRE SERVICE TO ENSURE THAT
16 ALL INSTRUCTORS PROVIDING GRANT-FUNDED CERTIFICATION CLASSES
17 PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (2)(a)(I)(C) OF THIS SECTION USE A
18 CURRICULUM THAT TEACHES TO THE APPLICABLE NATIONAL FIRE
19 PROTECTION ASSOCIATION OR NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING
20 GROUP STANDARDS. THE DIVISION SHALL SHARE ALL CURRICULUM AND
21 TRAINING BEST PRACTICES DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE
22 TRAIN-THE-TRAINER PROGRAM ACROSS THE FIRE SERVICE IN AN EFFORT TO
23 STANDARDIZE TRAINING, AS APPROPRIATE.

24 (b) DEVELOP A STATEWIDE OUTREACH CAMPAIGN TO INSPIRE THE
25 NEXT GENERATION OF FIREFIGHTERS, INCLUDING:

26 (I) CREATING BEST-PRACTICES DOCUMENTS FOR MARKETING THE
27 FIRE SERVICE AND RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION;

1 (II) CREATING AND MAINTAINING AN ONLINE PORTAL FOR
2 INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN A CAREER IN THE FIRE SERVICE AS EITHER A
3 CAREER OR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER, INCLUDING LINKS TO RELEVANT
4 RESOURCES;

5 (III) DEVELOPING OUTREACH TOOLS TARGETED TO COLORADO
6 YOUTH, PARTICULARLY YOUTH IN MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOL; AND

7 (IV) DEVELOPING MARKETING MATERIALS, INCLUDING:

8 (A) DIGITAL CONTENT HIGHLIGHTING CAREER PATHWAYS AND THE
9 MANY ROLES WITHIN THE FIRE SERVICE; AND

10 (B) ONLINE MARKETING STRATEGIES THAT INCLUDE SOCIAL MEDIA
11 OUTREACH.

12 **SECTION 3. Safety clause.** The general assembly finds,
13 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
14 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for
15 the support and maintenance of the departments of the state and state
16 institutions.