

April 24, 2025

To: Senators of the Local Government and Housing Committee

From: Rocky Piro, AICP

Subject: Testimony in Favor of HB25-1198 Regional Planning Roundtable Commission

Colorado has a history of creating enabling tools to address common issues that transcend local jurisdiction boundaries. Some of these tools include provisions allowing for intergovernmental agreements or creating districts with more than one locality. Over time, the state has also developed statutes *enabling* cities, towns, counties, regions, and state agencies to address various issues and challenges. Recent legislative sessions have provided more tools and guidance, including new actions to address housing shortages, multimodal mobility, water supply, climate, environmental justice, and more efficient land use patterns (such as transit communities).

In 2025, we have older statutory provisions now coupled with new statutes that tend to be single-issue focused, more permissive than directive, and limited in scope. They lack an integrated framework necessary for addressing 21st-century change and challenges that are more interrelated and complex.

Colorado has many different ways in which regions are defined for addressing interjurisdictional challenges. There are regions for addressing multimodal transportation. There are regions for addressing transit. There are regions that address water, including watersheds and water supply. There are regions for addressing economic opportunities. There are regions for addressing resource lands.

The American Planning Association Colorado Chapter supports establishing a regional commission to work with the various classifications of regions and identify the most effective way to address multidisciplinary regions for addressing 21st-century challenges and actions. In addressing multijurisdictional, multidisciplinary regions, the Chapter advocates that a region should be understood as a system of systems. Contemporary urban and regional planning provides models for integrated systems, which a commission should consider to address regionalism. Each regional system should be designed to address (1) environmental systems (including air quality, water, and climate), (2) built environment systems, including development patterns, buildable lands, housing, adequate facilities and services, and transportation, (3) economic systems, including regional economic resources, and (4) social systems and health.

Each regional roundtable that is created should also be tasked to address the integrated systems framework presented in the previous paragraph. Roundtables are anticipated to address ways to customize and tailor their work with the comprehensive framework to reflect their respective contexts best. Local jurisdictions in the regions work with the common integrated framework in a manner that embraces locally designed action.

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To: Senators of the Local Government and Housing Committee

From: TJ Dlubac, AICP

Subject: Testimony in Favor of HB25-1198 Regional Planning Roundtable Commission

Thank you Mister Chair and committee members for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1198 today. My name is TJ Dlubac. I am a professional planner with 20 years of experience and founded CPS, a land use planning consultant firm focused on supporting local government clients across Colorado who do not have the staff resources or expertise to meet the growth pressures they've experienced. Our team currently supports 13 Colorado communities through our on-call services and have worked with over 30 communities throughout the state of Colorado. I testify today in the capacity of a planner advocating for supporting local government control and reasonable and appropriate regional coordination.

Colorado's rural and small municipalities are facing local issues that are more complex and regional in nature than ever before. As we attempt to address local needs such as housing, economic development, water resources, transportation, and housing, we must take a regional view. From my experience throughout the State of Colorado, a regional approach to local planning and land use issues is more desirable to localities than having to solve complex, regional problems alone. While some may say that there are already structures in place to support regional coordination for local governments, I would respectfully submit that the current frameworks we do have in this state are singular in scope and rigid in nature. By way of an example of how this proposed regional roundtable would work, let's look at the Town of Ridgway. This is a small, yet growing town in Ouray County, 45 minutes to Telluride and 30 minutes from the City of Montrose.

Depending on the topic, the term "region" may differ. For example, Ridgway is impacted by the housing and job market of Telluride. They are impacted by a broader tourism reach where Ridgway is a basecamp to hikers, campers, skiers, and outdoor enthusiasts that reach the summits of San Juan County. Meanwhile, the residents of Ridgway have to travel to Montrose for groceries, healthcare, recreation center, and other services. When we refer to water supply, the region shifts drastically depending on where water rights are decreed and how they are conveyed. Similarly, watersheds can vary depending on drainage and main stem systems. These are only a few.

I highlight this example to showcase how each of these important topics – housing, economic development, climate change, water conservation, etc. all fall into different "regions" all of which have different state departments or boards/commissions that oversee that particular topic. For example, we have Economic Development regions, Transportation Planning Regions, CWCB Basin Roundtables, and so on and so on. Ridgway, and the dozens of communities like them, are seeking the support that this bill proposes to provide - a resource to approach local issues at a regional level.

This Bill, HB1198, seeks to create a commission and subsequent roundtable that can help direct questions and resources to communities seeking to collaborate regionally to better address the local issues they face day in and day out. I thank you for your time this afternoon to hear how HB1198 will create a local control based approach to regional collaboration that we have not yet been able to realize in Colorado.

April 24, 2025

To: Senators of the Local Government and Housing Committee

From: Ned West, AICP, Sr. Planner

Subject: Testimony in Favor of HB25-1198 Regional Planning Roundtable Commission

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Thank you Mister Chair and committee members for the opportunity to testify in support of HB25-1198 today. My name is Ned West. I am a professional senior municipal planner with 17 years of experience working in mountain community local government. I am a member of the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA), testifying as such today. I urge your support of HB25-1198 because creating a common, integrated planning framework with regional and interdisciplinary forums will support the variety of challenges facing local governments across Colorado.

While many communities plan across borders today, collaborating with essential state representatives will support communities with limited resources who will benefit from an integrated planning framework to face today's complex challenges. Although I am in favor of local government control as the most efficient and responsive framework for serving the specific needs of communities, I am aware that many of the complex issues facing today's communities are often best addressed on a regional level.

Housing is one of the greatest challenges facing the economic vitality of rural mountain resort communities who support the demands of statewide tourism. The increasing demand for attainable housing for the local workforce places an unsustainable strain on the balance of the demands for goods and services and the workforce capable of providing them. Only through coordinated regional efforts may rural mountain communities face this challenge.

Water is a vital resource and is essential for the nation's food production, healthy ecosystems, and thriving communities. I have worked in partnership with the Blue River Watershed Group to establish a consortium of dedicated professionals across jurisdictional boundaries to develop a Blue River Watershed Wildfire Ready Action Plan through the CWCB to prepare for the inevitable response to catastrophic wildfire. Only through a regional planning effort can communities in a tributary headwater to the Colorado River be prepared to protect and maintain vital drinking water sources, the ecological resources supporting wildlife and healthy forests, and a clean and flowing Colorado River on which 40 million people depend for water and electricity in the American West. It is this example of state support through the grassroots efforts of regional partners that represents the value of state supported regional planning.

HB25-1198 will create an integrated framework for regional partners to coordinate with one and other and the state to address the challenges facing communities while maintaining local control over decision making for their communities, local land use, resource protection, and economic vitality. As such, I encourage your support for the establishment of a state commission to coordinate the creation of regional and inter-disciplinary roundtables for the betterment of the people of Colorado.

April 24, 2025

To: Senators of the Local Government and Housing Committee

From: Susan Wood, FAICP

Subject: Testimony in Favor of HB25-1198 Regional Planning Roundtable Commission

Good afternoon, Chair Exum and members of the Committee. I have been working as a professional planner in Colorado for almost 30 years and I am here representing the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB25-1198, which provides a framework for regional, collaborative planning in Colorado. Planning for our communities, our regions, and the State is essential for us all to have the future that we want regarding housing, water, transportation, education, resources, infrastructure and more. It cannot be done in a vacuum.

This bill is important because it provides a tool for jurisdictions, counties, cities, and towns, to work together toward implementation of these plans, by forming a roundtable to facilitate collaboration; reinforcement of shared values and goals; and a means to share ideas, which will lead to effective and efficient sharing of actions and resources.

Good planning is comprehensive and holistic, and community driven. It is best achieved when it is based on shared values and common goals. Good planning does not stop at jurisdictional boundaries. Natural features, water among them does not recognize a county line or city limits, nor do any number of other items we must plan for in communities such as air, stormwater, roadway networks, and housing needs.

Good planning also recognizes the intersectionality of issues meaning that actions taken to affect one area will have an effect in another, and thus they must be considered together. A dialogue is essential for success.

It is important to point out the work that Colorado does and has done to plan for our future, having produced the Colorado Water Plan, the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan and the Strategic Plan, and the GHG Roadmap, to name a few, as well as the work accomplished in the 2024 legislative session that links housing and land use with transportation and water. Also to be noted is the variety of plans that communities across the state have individually accomplished.

Again, this is an important bill because it establishes a roundtable, a tool, for jurisdictions to use to work together toward implementation of our plans through effective and efficient sharing of actions and resources. It offers a way to knit our planning efforts together.

Thank you for your time and I am asking for your support for HB25-1198.

April 24, 2025

To: Senators of the Local Government and Housing Committee

From: Denis Balkas, AICP

Subject: Testimony in Favor of HB25-1198 Regional Planning Roundtable Commission

My name is Denise Balkas, and I am a former Colorado municipal planning director and member of the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association. My career spanned 30+ years in various cities across the country.

I am supportive of this legislation for two primary reasons:

1. THE CONCEPT OF REGIONAL ROUNDTABLES GIVES ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AN EQUITABLE SEAT IN THE STATEWIDE PLANNING PROCESS

As a practicing planner in Colorado for several decades, I heard frequent comments about urban vs rural, suburbs vs. central city and so forth. These comments usually reflected some sense of perceived unfairness related to geographic political influence, the allocation of resources, and the overall lack of equity. The legislation proposes that the geographic areas represented by each roundtable be locally defined. Roundtables will not be competing with other roundtables in having their issues articulated and in proposing solutions. At the conclusion of the roundtables' work, their findings will remain unique to each region and become part of a collective Colorado future vision that recognizes our similarities and differences.

2. THE WORK OF THE ROUNDTABLES WILL REPRESENT A LOCALLY CONTROLLED APPROACH TO STATEWIDE PLANNING NEEDS AND SOLUTIONS

Following comment number 1 above, the work of the roundtables will start and conclude at the local level. It need not be influenced or ranked by other regions. Quoting a colleague during a discussion about this legislation, *it is a bottom-up vs. top-down approach to local and regional planning.*

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

April 24, 2025

To: Senators of the Local Government and Housing Committee

From: Jenna Skinner, AICP

Subject: Testimony in Favor of HB25-1198 Regional Planning Roundtable Commission

Thank you, Mister Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to offer my written testimony regarding support of **HB 1198**. My name is Jenna Skinner, and I have been a professional planner for 25 years in the beautiful mountains of Colorado. I have worked in both the private and public sectors, with experience in home rule and county jurisdictions. As an active member of the planning profession, especially with APA Colorado, I urge you to support HB 1198 as a means to increase access to regional activities while decreasing the siloed effect of Colorado's large regions with cultural and geopolitical separations.

Over my career in the mountains, a repetitive theme constantly presents itself. Local governments actively seek to find what tools and methods others employ regarding the concerns we share: housing, water, wildfire, construction, wildlife, transportation, and economic growth. State agencies often do not look far enough into those jurisdictions to see what solutions planners seek. One of the most significant assumptions is that everyone has the exact issues of those shared concerns or area needs. And while that may be true on a macro scale, many microenvironments outside of the larger metropolitan areas have unique needs, unlike those experienced in urban centers. *The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place (George Bernard Shaw).*

A regional roundtable for planning will support the variety of challenges we face in the 21st century more productively. A common, integrated planning framework where planners can share their successes and failures regionally provides the appropriate learning forum for all communities. Collaboration provides areas with limited resources and mechanisms an opportunity and access to new tools to support planning regionally and across political borders, helping planners and decision-makers with more efficient planning. Bringing the State to the table will support better planning at all levels of government and encourage efficient use of resources, possibly decreasing spending by limiting the "reinvention" of existing solutions. Solutions that are unknown to folks because they lack awareness of their existence.

Colorado is a diverse landscape with varied topographies, climates, cultures, histories, industries, and divides (literally and figuratively). To base planning on a one-size-fits-all mentality is unproductive. While issues may be similar, solutions may not be. Supporting HB 1198 allows local governments regional coordination that effectively supports State efforts and connects these governments at all levels.

I am proud to live in Colorado, and I am proud to live in the "mountain resort area" of Colorado. We feel the State often overlooks us for funding under the assumption that there is a lot of money in the mountains- and while we have a limited population of people with means, it does not mean that jurisdictions do and can close the gap of this economic inequality. For example, because our region lacks available and affordable land for housing coupled with a severe lack of resources and infrastructure, we consider regionalism a necessity for survival. Having the State at our table with the support and understanding that may be missing would be the most productive measure in planning, resulting in more effective legislation.

Supporting HB 1198 will foster collaboration and resource sharing, potentially leading to more efficient services and infrastructure, economic growth, and stronger regional identities while addressing shared challenges more effectively. That is good planning. Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this action. With this bill, Colorado grows stronger, together with less divide, more understanding, and purpose.