

COLORADO RESILIENCY OFFICE REAUTHORIZATION BILL**HB19-1292****NEED FOR STATE-LEVEL RESILIENCY:**

In government, we are continuously faced with both shocks and stressors. Shocks are what Emergency Managers prepare for every day. These include the hazards we face in Colorado, such as tornadoes, hazardous materials spills, cyber events, public health crises, winter storms, severe rain events, and our top two hazards of wildfire and flood.

Stressors include those factors that can make or break a community, without regard to disaster. These may include things such as population growth, aging infrastructure, increasing interconnectivity through technology, socio-economic challenges, etc.

Our challenges are no longer community-specific challenges or isolated to one area. It is all interconnected. A natural resources challenge may lead to a public health crisis or an economic downturn for an area. A disaster may lead to a lack of housing or a community that feels disconnected or disenfranchised. Therefore, these challenges cannot be met by agencies or departments working individually.

Complexity is also increasing in Colorado and throughout the nation. When Colorado faced the Hayman wildfire in 2002, it was considered an anomaly. Fires like the Hayman wildfire now happen every year in the Western United States and this is not expected to improve in the coming years. Weather extremes have caused massive rain events dropping over 20 inches of rain in a matter of hours in places like Houston, TX. Tornadoes are happening where they have not happened in the past and Colorado just experienced the most extreme cyclone in its history. And even if we did not face another disaster after today, our state will be in recovery from the disasters we have already faced for decades to come. Anyone who has faced a wildfire knows that the fire is just the beginning - flood always follows fire. This recovery includes partners from economic development, public health, agriculture, natural resources, and utilities to name just a few. Add in a community that is facing multiple stressors and recovery from disasters can be an overwhelming endeavor that has the potential to cripple local governments.

Every community faces these types of shocks and stressors to one degree or another, but there is typically not one agency that works with communities who have experienced a large shock – or disaster – while also examining the stressors that play a role in how that community will be able to recover overall. Additionally, no one agency is responsible for looking 10-20 years into the future to determine how stressors will affect Colorado as a whole. This is why resilience is so important and must be a goal of the State of Colorado to meet our future challenges.

HOW DOES THE COLORADO RESILIENCY OFFICE PLAY A ROLE?

The CRO works at local, state and federal levels across multiple sectors and examines the health of a system through the broad lens of resilience. The CRO assists Colorado agencies and departments, as well as local and tribal governments, in meeting the needs we currently face as well as emerging issues from our key stressors so that we are best prepared for the challenges of the future.

This involves the complex problems faced by communities recovering from disaster. Ideally, with better long-term management of stressors, communities will better be able to handle the shocks that will inevitably occur. This has the potential to lead to less overall damages, less resource load at the state-level, and less money spent overall on the costs of re-building following disaster. This is why the CRO was created within the Department of Local Affairs.

One of DOLA's primary roles is to provide technical assistance to local governments to better help them meet the needs of the people they serve. Technical assistance and planning are both needed to build a culture of resiliency, to ensure these concepts are integrated into plans and policies, and to leverage available project funding for a greater overall benefit. State agencies are also in a better position to work with other state agencies, our federal partners, and the private sector on planning, policy and legislative efforts to meet Colorado's long-term needs.

The CRO was created due to a need following disaster, but its greatest value is in the pre-disaster planning and relationships that will lead to stronger local communities. Larimer County has benefited directly from the CRO's efforts and actively works on resilience goals as a product of that assistance. It is because of this assistance that Larimer County built a Resilience Framework and created the Larimer Connects project, one that is designed to connect communities to information and resources. I urge the committee to fund the CRO so that it may continue the efforts of the last five years.