

Colorado Recovery and Resiliency Collaborative

December 10, 2018

Irv Halter, Executive Director
Colorado Department of Local Affairs
1313 Sherman St., #518
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Mr. Halter:

As local governments who have been working together since 2015 as the Colorado Recovery and Resiliency Collaborative (CRRC) to identify lessons learned and recommended improvements following the catastrophic 2013 Flood, we write today in strong support of the Department of Local Affairs' funding request for three staff for the Colorado Resiliency Office, DOLA Priority R-02.

CRRC participants – Berthoud, Estes Park, Jamestown, Johnstown, Lyons, Milliken, Boulder, Colorado Springs, Evans, Fort Collins, Greeley, Longmont, Loveland, Manitou Springs, and Boulder, El Paso, Larimer and Weld counties, as well as staff from DOLA, DHSEM, and the Governor's Office – analyzed recovery processes from recent wildfires and floods and documented critical lessons to be learned, including a need to update the Colorado Disaster Emergency Act which resulted in passage of HB18-1394. A key tenet of that bill was to codify the Colorado Resiliency Office (CRO) to ensure its long-term viability and the ability of Colorado to respond to and be resilient in the face of future disasters and other shocks and stresses.

Current funding for CRO staff is set to expire on June 30, 2019, which would mean closure of the CRO. HB18-1394 states that CRO is to be funded with gifts, grants, and donations, which does not provide adequate, predictable funding for staffing the CRO. Therefore, it is critical that funds be allocated from the General Fund for these positions, per DOLA request R-02. The CRO cannot be effective unless it has ongoing staff to build expertise, relationships, and programs that will increase preparedness, decrease risk, connect critical sectors, and ultimately save valuable tax dollars, as for every \$1 spent on risk reduction, \$6 are saved.

Another key intention of HB18-1394 was to be proactive in response to changes at the federal level regarding emergency management. The federal direction places more responsibility on local and state governments for emergency management, creating incentives for local and state governments that have a proven record of mitigation and resiliency. We must be able to

demonstrate Colorado's commitment to mitigation and resiliency in order to fully benefit from federal programs in the future. By supporting the CRO, Colorado will be well-positioned when it comes to changes in funding and focus at the federal level.

The very nature of resilience is long-term thinking and cross-jurisdiction planning. There have been multiple disasters throughout the state since 2013, including wildfires, flooding, mudslides, landslides, and tornadoes. These disasters affected multiple municipalities, counties, and special districts. As we look to the future, Colorado's risk profile is changing: Wildfires are more catastrophic and frequent, rain events are more intense, and tornadoes are occurring in areas previously free from those hazards. Continued population growth will only exacerbate the risk.

Finally, as state and local staff move on to other jobs or retire, lessons learned from recent disasters may be lost; in addition, a new state administration will be coming into office. A permanently staffed CRO will provide institutional memory and support for Colorado's local governments to ensure that the next disaster-affected jurisdiction in Colorado can be more effective and resilient in their response and recovery.

Committing to the long-term sustainability of the Colorado Resiliency Office will enable the State of Colorado and its towns, cities, counties, and special districts to better respond to future disasters and attract federal dollars to reduce risk, save taxpayer dollars, and enhance local and state resilience.

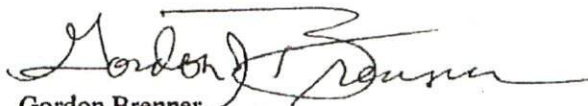
Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

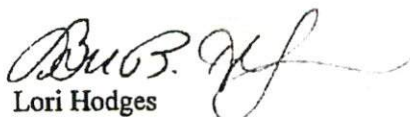
On Behalf of the Colorado Recovery and Resiliency Collaborative



Deb Gardner
Boulder County Commissioner



Gordon Brenner
Recovery Coordinator, City of Colorado Springs



Lori Hodges
Director, Larimer County Office of Emergency Management