



COLORADO

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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April 27, 2017

The Board of Mesa County Commissioners submits this letter in strong opposition to House Bill 17-1313, Civil Forfeiture Reform.

Mesa County is not opposed to increased transparency and accountability. However, we are opposed to this bill for several reasons:

First, counties were not involved in the initial stakeholder process. It is ironic that this bill seeks an increase in transparency, yet the process of developing this bill has not been transparent.

Second, House Bill 1313 will negatively impact rural counties. Many rural counties across the state are considered distressed counties, including Mesa County.

The Bill sets a \$50,000 threshold to go through the federal process, which has a detrimental effect on rural counties. In Mesa County, from 2012 to 2016, we received over \$2.6 million dollars in forfeiture funds; of which, approximately \$1.1 million was from funds under \$50,000.

In Garfield County, over the last five years, they have had 21 forfeitures, and 20 of those 21 were under \$50,000. Both Mesa and Garfield counties border I-70, and we deal with high rates of drug trafficking crimes.

Lastly, forfeiture funds are used in our community for training for all our public safety agencies: Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, Grand Junction Police and Fire Departments. Funds are also used for education intervention and prevention services for children and families, including Sober Grad Night, Alive at 25 and our Crime Stoppers program.

Commissioner Rose Pugliese sits on the Child Welfare Allocations Committee and is deeply involved in human services in Mesa County and the state. She hears first-hand the devastating stories of child abuse and neglect in our communities. Most of the cases relate to drug and alcohol issues in the home, which is why these various programs are so important.

Please do not take away this important source of funding from our most vulnerable population, our children, especially in rural communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Scott McInnis, Chair
Board of County Commissioners

Rose Pugliese
Commissioner

John Justman
Commissioner

CC: Governor John Hickenlooper
Attorney General Cynthia Coffman