



March 1, 2017

Joint Budget Committee Members  
Legislative Service Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
200 East 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Members of the Joint Budget Committee:

We write to you today to demonstrate our support of budget requests BA-06, “Implementation of Mental Health Hold Task Force Recommendations”, and BA-07, “Diversion from the Criminal Justice System”, offered by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). These budget requests aim to improve outcomes for individuals experiencing mental health crises and individuals with mental illness in the criminal justice system by stopping the use of jails, emergency rooms, and prisons as behavioral health centers and expanding and coordinating behavioral health resources across the state.

Budget request BA-06 requests \$3.5 million Marijuana Tax cash funds (MTCF) in FY 2017-18 to implement recommendations of CDHS’ Mental Health Task Force. This task force recommended ending the practice of using jails for M-1 holds and expanding the behavioral health network across the state. The request will fund training for people who have regular contact with individuals on mental health holds and increase regional coordination among hospitals, law enforcement, Behavioral Health Organizations, and the Crisis Response System. The request also includes a transportation pilot program to address the absence of crisis stabilization units near many of our counties and study the difficulty of transporting individuals hundreds of miles to the nearest unit.

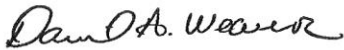
Budget request BA-07 requests \$6 million MTCF and 2.3 FTE in FY 2017-18 to support and incentivize local partnerships between law enforcement and behavioral health service providers to expand criminal justice diversion and increase the use of evidence-based programs such as co-responder models and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD). These programs aim to improve outcomes and reduce rates of recidivism by connecting individuals to community resources, substance use treatment, or vocational training.

Approving these budget requests will add important resources to our communities so that we can better serve those with behavioral health disorders. Ending the use of jails for people in mental health crisis will lead to better health outcomes for individuals, cost-savings to our jails, and a recognition of the dignity of individuals in crisis. Additionally, coordinating crisis response and incentivizing community partnerships will connect people to the help they need thereby reducing recidivism rates and helping people become productive members of society.

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Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Commissioner David Weaver  
Chair, JPS Steering Committee  
Colorado Counties Inc.



Commissioner Nancy Jackson  
Vice Chair, JPS Steering Committee  
Colorado Counties, Inc.

cc:

Governor John Hickenlooper  
Senator Kevin Grantham, President of the Senate  
Senator Lucia Guzman, Senate Minority Leader  
Representative Crisanta Duran, Speaker of the House  
Representative Patrick Neville, House Minority Leader  
Reggie Bicha, Executive Director of Colorado Department of Human Services  
Henry Sobanet, Director of Office of State Planning & Budgeting  
Carolyn Kampman, Joint Budget Committee Staff  
Kurt Morrison, Legislative Affairs Director for the Governor's Office  
Lauren Lambert, Deputy Legislative Director for the Governor's Office  
Adam Zarrin, Policy Advisor for the Governor's Office  
Riley Kitts, Legislative Liaison for Colorado Department of Human Services