

## **Counties on the Front Lines of COVID-19 Response**

### **- By the CCI Board of Directors**

We are living through an unprecedented crisis in our history. During this public health crisis, your county governments are on the front lines of the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak. County elected officials and staff have been coordinating with state and federal partners to activate emergency response plans, set-up and staff disaster assistance centers, protect vulnerable populations in your community, ensure that essential government services are not delayed or interrupted and provide updated information to citizens through social media and virtual town hall meetings.

County offices of emergency management across the state are equipped and trained to routinely respond to natural disasters like wildfires, tornadoes, floods and blizzards. While this crisis is unique in the sense that it is affecting every single household in every single county in Colorado at the same time, our staffs are trained professionals and are responding and helping ensure the safety of our communities. Similarly, our county health departments are trained to respond to all manner of communicable diseases and provide immediate policy guidelines and safety measures to protect our citizens.

In the midst of this crisis, positive and reassuring stories of county leadership around the state are emerging daily. This past week, the state announced a program to provide emergency childcare for policeman, firefighters, EMTs and health care providers whose continued service is absolutely critical during this response. This childcare initiative was the brainchild of local elected officials who saw a need and moved quickly to partner with other community stakeholders to address it. This kind of innovative problem-solving is the hallmark of effective local government.

At the same time, county commissioners are working to keep our staff safe during this disaster response. Counties are striving to comply with the Governor's executive order in an attempt to reduce our onsite workforce without compromising the critical services we provide. Where possible, we are instituting work-from-home options and adhering to the safe social distancing guidelines for those essential personnel that are remaining onsite in county facilities.

The immediate and effective response to this public health crisis is the result of a strong partnership between local government, state and federal agencies, the Governor's office, our congressional delegation, the non-profit and the for-profit community. Colorado Counties, Incorporated (CCI), the statewide association of county commissioners, has also been instrumental in compiling local initiatives and best practices as well as state and federal guidance documents on its website (<http://ccionline.org/health-and-human-services/corona-virus-information/>), and serving as a "go-to" outlet for commissioners and staff to find resources and get

questions answered. Counties all across the state applaud Executive Director John Swartout and his staff for their efforts.

This is a team effort and together we will get through this challenging time. We would ask that you please be responsible and follow the guidelines set forth by your local and state health organizations. God bless you and God bless this beautiful state we call home.

**The Board of Directors of Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI), is comprised of the following county commissioners: Jim Zwetzig (Morgan County), Debbie Bell (Fremont County), Terry Hart (Pueblo County), Barbara Kirkmeyer (Weld County), Roger Partridge (Douglas County), Felix Lopez (Las Animas County), Ben Tisdell (Ouray County) and Mark Roeber (Delta County).**