

March 23, 2022

RE: Prioritize **community** in “community safety initiatives”

Dear Governor Jared Polis, President Steve Fenberg, and Speaker Alec Garnett:

We, community-based organizations and leaders, are writing with regard to legislation distributing federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and state funds as part of Governor Polis’ Comprehensive Safety Plan of Action. We ask that **(1) additional efforts be made to authentically include the input of community about this potential spending and program details, and; (2) resources be exclusively earmarked for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in community safety grant programs like those in SB22-145, equal to or greater than funds being designated for law enforcement and other public entities, and that do not make CBOs compete with law enforcement or public entities for grants.**

The organizations and individuals signing this letter may be applying for community safety grants or work in partnership with those providers. We are disappointed that the first time many of us were hearing of these potential grant programs was the outreach for this letter. This legislation cannot be successful without much closer input from potential community grantees.

In addition, we are disappointed that no currently pending legislation regarding community safety grants, like SB22-145, is designated exclusively for CBOs. A CBO-specific grant program for community safety programs, equal or greater in resources to that designated for law enforcement and other public entities, will ensure these critical and long-overdue investments actually reach our communities and achieve maximum impact for community health and safety.

That is not what we understood the Governor's public safety plan would or should prioritize. Nor does this current plan fully seize this rare opportunity with one-time Federal money to catalyze the transformational shift that is needed toward root cause, community-driven approaches proven to be effective in building safe, healthy, and resilient communities.

Community-based organizations play an essential and unique role in fostering safe and healthy communities. They have the mission, personnel, expertise, and on-the-ground community trust necessary to succeed. CBOs’ successes with operating community safety focused programs is demonstrated by Colorado’s experience with direct-to-community grant programs like WAGEES, as well as by experience in other states and by national research.

Colorado has historically and dramatically underinvested in essential community-based infrastructure, especially in communities of color, that is proven to reduce harm, violence, and crime. Investing directly and substantially in community is an initial step toward addressing these long-standing inequities.

We respectfully request your time in a statewide Zoom conference this upcoming week so that all interested community-based organizations from across the state can join to learn more about these possible grant programs and their details, and to provide their input. We look forward to learning more about your response to our request.

If you have any questions, or to arrange scheduling, please do not hesitate to contact Deborah Richardson, Executive Director, ACLU of Colorado at drichardson@aclu-co.org, who will communicate with all signees below.

Sincerely,



American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Colorado
American Friends Service Committee, Colorado
Carroll Spelke - Owner of Totally Interior LLC (*Denver*)
Casey Kite - Community Member
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Crime Survivors Network
Colorado Farm & Food Alliance (*Western Slope*)
Colorado Freedom Fund
Colorado Juvenile Defender Center
Colorado Latino Leadership Advocacy and Research Organization (CLLARO)
Colorado Office of the Alternate Defense Counsel
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Colorado Working Families Party
CommunityWorks (*Colorado Springs, Denver, Pueblo*)
Companeros: Four Corners Immigrant Resource Center (*Durango*)
Covid-19 Eviction Defense Project
Decolonizing Delta County School District
Delta County Coalition Advocating for Radically Equitable Spaces
Denver Homeless Out Loud
Denver Task Force To Reimagine Policing and Public Safety
Elsewhere Studios (*Paonia*)
Expunge Colorado
Four Corners Rainbow Youth Center (*Durango*)
Gina J. Lopez - Montezuma Community Member & Tribal Resident
Girls Inc. of Metro Denver
James Fittz - Community Member
Jonathan Charles McMillan - Owner of Be Better Than Average LLC (*Aurora*)
Katie Meehan - Community Member
Light Carrier (*Denver*)
Lighthouse Consultants Colorado, LLC (*Aurora, Denver*)
Mirror Image Arts (*Denver*)
NAACP Colorado Montana Wyoming State-Area Conference
Nadine Kerstetter - Teacher and Job Coach at Women's Correctional Facility (*Denver*)
Paonia Physical Therapy
ParadigmONE (*Aurora*)
ProgressNow Colorado
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
Rub n Restore, Inc. (*Paonia*)
Ryan Strand - Community Member
Seasoned With Grace UnBoxed (*Denver*)
Second Chance Center (*Aurora*)

Sue Torfin - Member of St Andrews Episcopal Church

The Empowerment Program (*Denver*)

The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado (on behalf of 400+ congregations across Colorado)

The ROCK Center (*Aurora*)

Together Colorado

9to5 Colorado