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March 25, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Through: Lee dePalo  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VIII  
Denver Federal Center  
Building 710, Box 25267  
Denver, CO 80225-0267

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I respectfully request that you declare a Major Disaster for the State of Colorado as a direct result of the overwhelming and adverse impacts from the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2019 (COVID-19) beginning January 27, 2020 and continuing. I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State, Tribal governments, and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance Categories A through G, and all Individual Assistance Programs for Colorado's 64 counties and federally recognized tribal nations including: Individuals and Households Program, Mass Care and Emergency Assistance, Crisis Counseling Program, Disaster Case Management, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Disaster Legal Services, the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Transitional Sheltering Assistance. I am also requesting Hazard Mitigation statewide and any other Stafford Act disaster assistance programs that may be appropriate.

As stated in your proclamation of National Emergency, "It is the preeminent responsibility of the Federal Government to take action to stem a nationwide pandemic that has its origins abroad..." The fiscal impact to the State of Colorado will be beyond anything that our state, tribal, and local governments will be able to bear under these circumstances without causing severe harm to the

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
March 25, 2020  
Page 2

operating capacity of governmental reserves. As a result, I am requesting Federal assistance at 100% funding to alleviate these impacts caused by this global pandemic.

### **Incident Timeline**

As you are aware, on January 31, 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a Public Health Emergency (PHE) for the United States. On March 11, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic. You declared a national emergency on March 13 2020, in accordance with Section 201 of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. § 1621.

As of March 25, there are 912 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the State of Colorado, of which 11 died. When compared to other states, Colorado has the one of the highest rates of COVID-19 cases per capita. These numbers are anticipated to grow exponentially as the disease spreads rapidly in the coming weeks.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused, and continues to cause, unprecedented disruption of normal community functions and services including disruption to, and an increased demand for, lifesaving and life sustaining services, supplies and equipment; disruptions to and an increased demand for essential community services; and threats to the health and safety of all people of the State.

### **State and Local Response**

The Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) is currently supporting state agencies, local jurisdictions and tribal governments, through the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Colorado State Emergency Operations Center activated on March 2, 2020, to establish, maintain and share situational awareness. I signed an Executive Order (EO# D 2020-03) on March 11, 2020, proclaiming that a State of Emergency exists for all counties in the State and directed that the Colorado State Emergency Operations Plan be implemented. I ordered into active state service the organized militia of the state to include the National Guard and requested Colorado state health insurers to waive deductibles and copayments for COVID-19 tests. The Insurance Commissioner for the Colorado Division of Insurance issued Bulletin No. 4.104 on March 9, 2020 directing insurance carriers to modify procedures for tele-medicine, prescription refills, and co-pays in response to my directive.

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
March 25, 2020  
Page 3

As the risk of illness and death appears to be higher in those members of the population over the age of 60 as well as in those with pre-existing chronic health conditions; and, because there is an increased risk of rapid spread of COVID-19 in populations living in congregate settings such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities, I issued a Notice of Public Health Order 20-20 on March 12, 2020. This Order prohibits activities in nursing homes and long-term care facilities that could spread COVID-19. Additionally, I implemented a Notice of Public Health Order 20-23 on March 19, 2020 prohibiting gatherings of 10 people or more.

Recognizing the need to take more drastic mitigation measures to slow the spread of this deadly pandemic, I signed Executive Order # D 2020-007 on March 18, 2020 to prohibit public school districts, charter schools, and private schools from conducting in-person educational, recreational, and other K-12 school programs in their school facilities. I also issued a Notice of Public Health 20 - 22 on March 17, 2020 closing bars, restaurants, theaters, gymnasiums, casinos, nonessential personal services facilities, and horse track and off-track betting facilities statewide. These extraordinary measures were taken to combat community spread ravaging our State.

### **Local EOC Activations and Emergency Declarations**

Fifty-eight (58) counties in Colorado activated their local emergency operations centers and nine (9) municipalities have activated their emergency operations centers. Our federally recognized tribal nations have declared emergencies and 58 counties in the state have declared local states of emergency. I expect Colorado local governments will remain at this heightened state of emergency for an indefinite period of time.

### **State EOC Activations**

The Colorado State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) activated to Level 1 on March 10, 2020 with numerous federal partners and will remain activated for the duration of the emergency. Currently, the SEOC is operating in a Unified Command structure with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

### **State and Local Impacts**

While the state recognizes the efficacy and necessity to deploy a strategy of containment, it cannot ignore that such actions have a tangible and immediate negative impact on the economy.

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
March 25, 2020  
Page 4

The strategies outlined to curb the spread of COVID-19, along with similar strategies deployed across the nation and the general growing level of fear and uncertainty, quickly and severely reduce demand for Colorado companies' products and services, which means a reduction in revenue. In a very simplified model, revenues must be at least equal to costs for a company to remain solvent and continue operations. With the drastic reduction in revenues that will necessarily follow the closures and social distancing measures outlined in the previous section, companies will seek to reduce operating costs to mitigate losses. In the short term, companies typically focus on variable costs (costs of supplies) rather than fixed (rent). The largest category of variable costs is labor.

### **Significant Event Cancellations/Postponements and Service Closures**

As a result of the above Executive Orders, Public Health Orders, and numerous orders issued by counties, tribes, towns, cities, and private businesses public gatherings and events have been canceled. This has resulted in the in-person closures of Colorado universities, colleges, professional and amateur sports team games and seasons, and the suspension of public activities that represent a way of life and community for Coloradans in every corner of the state. These cancellations and suspensions will result in significant loss of economic productivity and commerce.

As of today, the Stay-At-Home Order of March 23, 3030 issued by City and County of Denver Mayor Hancock is fully impacting residents and businesses in Colorado's largest metropolitan area. Other jurisdictions are contemplating similar protective actions. These actions are unprecedented and I respectfully ask you to respond with similar unprecedented support for Colorado.

### **Behavioral Health Challenges**

In stopping the spread of COVID-19 I am increasingly concerned about the behavioral health, mental and emotional well-being of our health care workers, first responders, government workers, parents, children, and all Coloradans from all walks of life. None of us will be immune from the toll this will take on our mental health. Therefore, I am specifically requesting the Crisis Counseling Program from FEMA, not only for the survivors of this pandemic, but for those who have sacrificed their own safety to put the needs of all Coloradoans above their own.

In implementing the Crisis Counseling Program, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment will need to work with FEMA to develop innovative approaches and solutions to

meet the behavioral health challenges we all face. I anticipate Colorado will need to develop, with your support, tele-medicine support technology to make available counseling to every community member in the state and address a variety of mental health solutions. We must be ready to meet this need.

**Colorado Individual Assistance Program demographics**

	Population*	Average of Persons below Poverty Levels ***	Median Household Income ***	Percent Elderly (Over 65 years of age) ***)	Percent With a Disability(U nder 65 years of age) ***	Percent Pre-Disaster Unemploy ment.**
National	328,239,523	12.3%	\$61,937	16%	8.6%	3.6%
Colorado	5,760,910	9.6%	\$71,953	14.2%	7.4%	2.5%

\* US Census Population Estimates, July 2019  
 \*\* US Bureau of Labor Statistics January 2020  
 \*\*\* American Community Survey 2018 1yr.

The small business community in our state suffered substantial economic losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. With major employers closing their doors or encouraging employees to work from home, small business, hospitality, and entertainment commerce dropped precipitously across the state. Many small businesses do not have sufficient capital to withstand closures lasting multiple weeks, forcing them to take drastic measures including temporary lay-offs to stay afloat. I established a COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force, that includes the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) to increase the resilience of the business community through compounding and cascading impacts of this unprecedented and financially trying time. Lastly, both the Southern Ute Tribe in Ignacio, Colorado and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in Towaoc, Colorado made the difficult decision to close their casinos, which will have major economic implications for employment, tourism, and hospitality industries in the tribal communities and the surrounding jurisdictions.

At the national level, the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Report on Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims released on Thursday, March 19, 2020, showed one of the largest single-week increases in initial claims since the beginning of the current economic expansion for the week

ending on March 14, 2020. Seasonally adjusted weekly initial claims jumped about 50,000 or 25%. It should be noted that this is DOL's advance estimate, and may change in further revisions. The United States Small Business Administration (SBA) declared an Economic Injury Disaster on March 16, 2020, which will cover all 64 counties in the state of Colorado. The full economic impact to our state cannot be fully captured at this time, however, it is clear that the state will require substantial financial assistance from the federal government in the future.

Colorado's Unemployment Insurance Benefits Office reported unemployment claims rose from 1,643 in the week ending March 14, 2020 to over 18,000 claims on March 20, 2020. This increase is severely overwhelming the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment staff and information technology systems to handle such a surge. I anticipate that FEMA's Individual Assistance Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, will help Colorado find a solution to provide relief to the thousands of unemployed Coloradoans with this unprecedented demand on our systems.

The Colorado unemployment rate was 2.8 percent in 2019 and 2.5 percent in January, 2020. However, the unemployment rate is not expected to begin reflecting the impact of measures taken to protect the population and healthcare system from COVID-19 until April estimates are released May 22, 2020.

Over 11% of Colorado's jobs are in leisure and hospitality, which have immediately been negatively affected by COVID-19. For some of Colorado's counties, these jobs are more than 50% of the total county employment. Often these jobs are lower wage and rely more on tips than salaries. These are some of Colorado's most vulnerable employees immediately at risk. Additionally, Colorado has over 500,000 self employed workers (15% of total) who are not part of the unemployment insurance system. More than 11,000 self-employed workers are estimated to be lost and up to 75,000 are immediately at risk from lost income or potentially complete business closure from the pandemic and don't have the safety net of unemployment assistance. Job losses across all of these sectors could be as high as 473,000.

### **Actions Being Undertaken**

- March 11 - State declaration emergency in response to COVID-19 through Executive Order # D 2020 - 003.
- March 12 – Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) issued a public health order 20-20 to restrict visitors to all Colorado skilled nursing facilities, assisted living residences, and intermediate care facilities.

- March 14 – Ordering the closure of downhill ski areas due to presence of COVID-19 in mountain communities with limited care capacity with Executive Order #2020-004.
- March 14 – Activate the State’s Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) activated into full Level 1 operations.
- March 17 – CDPHE issued a public health order 20-22 temporarily closing restaurants, bars, theaters, gyms, casinos, and other large venue spaces for 30 days.
- March 18 – CDPHE issued public health order 20-23 to limit mass gatherings including community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, and sporting events to no more than 10 participants.
- March 18 - Ordering suspension of normal in-person interaction at all public and private elementary and secondary schools in the State of Colorado due to the presence of COVID-19.
- March 19 - Ordering the temporary cessation of all elective and non-essential surgeries and procedures and preserving personal protective equipment and ventilators in Colorado due to the presence of COVID-19.
- March 20 - Small Business Administration (SBA) opened access to the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program to small businesses in all 64 counties and tribes as a result of my request for assistance.
- March 20 - Extending the income tax payment deadlines due to the COVID-19 Disaster Emergency.
- March 22 - Executive order limiting evictions, foreclosures, and public utility disconnections and expediting unemployment insurance claim processing to provide relief to coloradans affected by COVID-19.
- March 22 - Executive Order and corresponding Public Health Order to implement a 50% reduction in non-essential business in-person work and increase social distancing.
- March 24 - I sent a letter encouraging new safety protocols for grocery stores.

### **Importance of Colorado Volunteers**

I want to convey to you the importance of the volunteer workforce in Colorado and the voluntary organizations already working to help provide needed resources to our most vulnerable Coloradans. Our volunteers are able to do the work that the State cannot provide. Without these volunteers, in some cases risking their own welfare, in service of others, the importance of which cannot be overstated. I hope you will join me in acknowledging the strong work of volunteers across the Nation and provide support to our volunteer workers and volunteer organizations that need resources to keep providing these critical services that will continue to be needed.

### **Unique Considerations**

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
March 25, 2020  
Page 8

While many of these events are tied to collective public health efforts to stem the pandemic, these actions are not without impact on the lives and livelihoods of Coloradans, generating fear and stress. The footprint of this disaster event is already geographically broader, will be chronologically longer, and is already more inclusive of Colorado's whole population than any other disasters previously experienced.

My staff and I are certain that there will be a need for these programs in response to COVID-19; however, the extended duration of this type of event means we need adequate time to chart the evolution of infection rates and develop innovative solutions for response and treatment. This will help us identify who these programs will serve, how they will be deployed, and how to address the unique challenges presented by this pandemic. This emergency will leave no one untouched. My request is that Colorado be awarded these programs, and that we are given a waiver to be able to wait to complete time-sensitive program requirements until the full scope of the disaster is known and this first wave will have provided us with better epidemiological intelligence to better plan for and manage additional infectious waves. We intend to utilize planning assistance from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration prior to the submission of any time-sensitive program requirements, due to the unique considerations of COVID-19.

In addition to the Stafford Act programs for Public Assistance and Individual Assistance, I am also requesting the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) authorized under 42 U.S.C. 5170c and hazard mitigation assistance authorized under 42 U.S.C. 5172 and implemented in 44 CFR § 206.266. The purpose of requesting this program is for the examination and implementation of mitigation measures that address pandemic mitigation. This pandemic will require all of us to utilize alternative approaches and think differently from traditional approaches to emergency management. Understanding the importance and cost-saving results of mitigation measures in other disasters, Colorado emergency management staff are anxious to work with your staff at FEMA to develop innovative solutions for mitigation measures that can be implemented in the context of a global pandemic.

Furthermore, the unique nature of this global pandemic will make preliminary damage assessments impossible to perform due to the dynamic nature of the evolving incident. Conducting damage assessments would jeopardize the health and safety of our collective staff and would not effectively be able to measure the impact of this disaster at a single point in time.

**Recent Presidential Major Disaster Declarations for Colorado**





Hinsdale Avalanche Flooding EO# 2019-005  
State Hwy 145 Rockfall EO# 2019-008

**2018**

State Cybersecurity Incident EO# 2018-001  
416 Wildland Fire EO# 2018-002  
Emery Gap Wildland Fire EO# 2018-003  
Spring Fire EO# 2018-007  
Weston Pass Wildland Fire EO# 2018-013  
Chateau Wildland Fire EO# 2018-014  
Divide Wildland Fire EO# 2018-015  
Sulphur Wildland Fire EO# 2018-016  
Lake Christine Wildland Fire EO# 2018-017  
Skunk Creek Wildland Fire EO# 2018-019  
Red Canyon Wildland Fire EO# 2018-022  
Cabin Lake Wildland Fire EO# 2018-023  
Silver Creek Wildland Fire EO# 2018-029

**2017**

Logan Fire EO# 2017-006  
Severe Storms and Flooding EO# 2017-008  
Solar Eclipse EO# 2017-020  
Pine Tree Fire EO# 2017-022  
Deep Creek Fire EO# 2017-024  
Winter Valley Fire EO# 2017-025  
Assist California Fire EO# 2017-027  
Assist Hurricane Maria EO# 2017-029

**2016**

March 2016 Blizzard EO# 2016-002  
Cold Spring Fire EO# 2016-004  
Hayden Pass Fire EO# 2016-006  
Beulah Hill Fire EO# 2016-008  
Junkins Fire EO# 2016-010  
Starwood Fire EO# 2016-012

**2015**

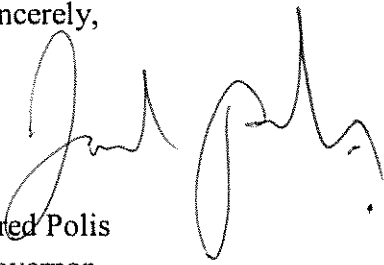


The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
March 25, 2020  
Page 12

accordance with 44 CFR section 206.33(d), since this incident is of unusual severity and magnitude and does not require field damage assessments to determine the need for supplemental Federal assistance under the Act.

On behalf of all Coloradans I respectfully request your support and thoughtful consideration of this request. The programs and resources you can bring to Colorado will help not only Coloradans but people throughout the United States. Your leadership and guidance is appreciated and encouraged.

Sincerely,



Jared Polis  
Governor