



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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February 20, 2024

Mike Johnston
Office of the Mayor
City and County of Denver
Denver, CO 80202
201 W Colfax Ave.

RE: Mesa County's position on providing aid for immigration-related challenges

Dear Mayor Johnston:

The Board of Mesa County Commissioners is writing in response to the significant challenges faced by the City of Denver due to the recent influx of immigrants and its call for aid. This became a concern to us after reading the Newsmax article, "*Denver could forge migrant 'partnership' with Fort Collins and Grand Junction, Denver mayor says.*" We confirmed with the Mayor of Grand Junction, Anna Stout, that the City of Grand Junction has not been communicating with your office. Perhaps you heard from one or more of our dedicated non-profits who help the vulnerable in our county. If that is the case, please know that while they are certainly well-intentioned organizations that can give out food, clothing, tents, and other tangible supplies, they can't cover the additional costs of education or shelter.

We appreciate Denver's efforts to address the complex and sensitive immigration issues, but we must be clear and communicate Mesa County's inability to extend aid. Our decision stems not from a lack of empathy or understanding but from fiscal responsibility and the constraints and challenges we face within our jurisdiction.

Like many others, Mesa County is working diligently to address various pressing local concerns that demand our immediate attention and resources. These include but are not limited to, public health and safety and the economic well-being of our citizens. Our current focus must remain on addressing these critical needs, leaving us unable to extend support beyond our county's citizens.

Community resources within Mesa County are strained by the population of unsheltered homeless individuals, which is currently estimated at 2,300. At the same time, our healthcare and educational systems face financial strains, with substantial losses in indigent care and lower-than-average state funding for schools. It would be cruel to help others when we struggle to care for our most vulnerable citizens.

Over 46,000 Mesa County residents, one-third of the county population, receive one or more public benefits, with an average of 1,500 new applications each month. Mesa County is already \$400,000 short of annual funding for our senior nutrition program.

Mesa County will not turn its back on its citizens.

Offering aid without the financial means, resources, or a sustainable plan to support immigrants is unethical. Good intentions must be backed by practical capabilities — Mesa County does not have the heart to give false hope.

Sincerely,

Bobbie Daniel
Chair

Cody Davis
Commissioner

Janet Rowland
Commissioner