

MESA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Resolution No. 2024-13

Resolution Declaring Mesa County as a Non-Sanctuary County, Setting Priorities and Expectations in Response to Immigration Influx

WHEREAS, the City of Denver, with a population of 713,000 people, has declared itself a sanctuary city and has served more than 37,000 migrants at a cost of 38 million dollars and growing; and,

WHEREAS, in the past two months, Denver has seen a dramatic uptick in arrivals and is currently sheltering 4,500 people. This influx – the fourth significant surge in arrivals since late 2022 – is straining capacity and, based on current projections, could force the city to cut as much as \$180 million from its annual budget, and,

WHEREAS, the City of Denver faces an accelerated budget shortfall and agency budget cuts to fund migrant services; and,

WHEREAS, Denver’s safety-net hospital, Denver Health, has seen at least 9,000 migrant patients in the past year, costing at least \$10 million in unreimbursed care; and,

WHEREAS, Denver schools face a shortfall of \$17.5 million in funding due to the continuous influx of migrants in the Denver area; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Denver has established policies constraining individual migrants to 14 days of shelter and families to 42 days of shelter; and,

WHEREAS, both Denver and Carbondale plan to close their shelters in March and April of 2024; and,

WHEREAS, Mesa County supports legal immigration into the United States; and,

WHEREAS, Mesa County recognizes the plight of those seeking refuge and asylum from oppressive governments in other parts of the world; and,

WHEREAS, Mesa County respects the history of the United States as a beacon of freedom and opportunity in the world; and,

WHEREAS, those who enter the country illegally can pose a significant public health and safety risk to a community when there is an increase in crime, communicable disease, and accelerating demand and unsustainability on public infrastructure such as services, public safety, schools, and the justice system; and,

WHEREAS, the cascading impacts of migrant relocations from Denver pose a risk to Mesa County, its citizens, and service providers; and,

WHEREAS, Mesa County does not have the resources or infrastructure to address the human needs it is currently facing; and,

WHEREAS, community resources within Mesa County are strained by the population of unsheltered homeless individuals, which is currently estimated at 2,300; and,

WHEREAS, over 46,000 Mesa County residents (one-third of the entire county population) are currently receiving one or more public benefits, with an average of 1,500 new applications each month; and,

WHEREAS, while Mesa County is seeing a record need for public benefits due to high inflation, we are also experiencing cuts in federal and state funding along with increased expectations and unfunded mandates from the federal and state governments; and,

WHEREAS, Mesa County is already \$400,000 short of annual funding needed for our Senior Nutrition Program; and,

WHEREAS, St. Mary's and Community hospitals currently have an annual loss of \$18.6M (combined) for unreimbursed care; and

WHEREAS, Mesa County schools do not have unlimited resources; currently, SD51 is in the bottom three out of 178 Colorado school districts in terms of state funding; and,

WHEREAS, Mesa County Sheriff's Office established a policy in 2014 stating that the Mesa County jail will not be used to hold detainees of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who have not been criminally charged. The Mesa County Sheriff's Office will continue to cooperate with ICE to the extent Colorado law will allow. This 2014 policy has been misinterpreted to suggest that Mesa County is a sanctuary county, leading to its erroneous inclusion on websites claiming such status.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MESA COUNTY THAT:

THE MESA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, declares that Mesa County is NOT a sanctuary county and will not open shelters or provide services, other than emergency services, to uninvited migrants and/or illegal immigrants that may arrive in unincorporated Mesa County. Mesa County will continue to prioritize the needs of our local citizens.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of February, 2024.

By: _____

Bobbie Daniel, Chair

Attest:

Clerk & Recorder