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House Bill 15-1354
Sponsors: Rep. Moreno
House State, Veterans, & Military Affairs
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Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Kelly Brough and I am the president and CEO of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, an organization representing over 3,000 businesses and their 300,000 employees. For nearly 150 years, the Chamber has been the voice for both small and large businesses across the seven-county metro region.

I'm here today to ask for your support of HB 1354. The Denver chamber has a long history of engaging on public policy issues affecting our business climate in Colorado. Our membership guides our positions and initiatives. Two years ago, through a series of focus groups, our members identified the top issues they want us to tackle to ensure our business community continues to thrive. We narrowed to our top five critical issues – and one of those top issues for our members is engaging independent / unaffiliated voters in the primary process in our state. Our members expressed concern with the barriers a large portion of our population faces when trying to fully and easily participate in our election process.

HB 1354 would make it easier for unaffiliated voters to participate in the election process in our state. More than 1 million active Colorado voters — those “unaffiliated” with a party — are currently excluded from taxpayer-financed primary elections. That means that although they are helping to fund primaries, they have more barriers to participation than unaffiliated voters in the majority of other states in the country.

And this group of more than one million is growing – quickly. Colorado has the distinction of having the fastest growing percentage of unaffiliated voter registration in the country. Our unaffiliated voters now comprise 35% of our registered voters, compared to 33% Republican and 31% Democrat registration.

With nearly 50 percent of registered voters in Colorado under age 26 being unaffiliated, the need to reform our primary system in order to engage these voters in the primary process will only grow over time. Simply put, we're excluding a large and growing portion of Coloradans from participating in the democratic process.

HB 1354 provides a straight forward means for an unaffiliated voter to more readily participate in a primary election. What we value is participation and engagement – and our closed primary system is counter to those values.

To us, this is an issue of fairness. In Colorado, we collaborate in all we do. We believe that increased stakeholder engagement and enhanced participation make for a stronger Colorado. I urge you to vote yes on HB 1354. Thank you and I am happy to take any questions.