

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

District 1 - John Justman 970-244-1605
 District 2 - Scott McInnis 970-244-1604
 District 3 - Rose Pugliese 970-244-1606

P.O. Box 20,000 544 Rood Avenue Grand Junction, Colorado 81502-5010 mcboecc@mesacounty.us Fax (970) 244-1639

January 27, 2015

Lois Court, Chair
 House Finance Committee
 Colorado General Assembly
 Denver, CO 80203

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

Please accept this Letter of Support, in lieu of testimony, on behalf of the Board of Commissioners for Mesa County, for HB15-1079 – Expanding the Medicaid Teen Pregnancy and Dropout Prevention Program.

Mesa County has proudly partnered, through our Department of Human Services, with Hilltop Community Resources, to provide the local matching funds, approximately \$19,440 annually, for the "Get Real" program. While this county match has presented an ever increasing challenge during the recent years of our suffering economy, we prioritized this program because teen pregnancy is a huge driver and indicator of beginning a life in poverty and reliance on public assistance, for both the mother and the child.

The outcomes of this program are irrefutable. The only real way to increase awareness and reduce teen pregnancy is through direct interaction and counseling with high risk teens as has been demonstrated through the "Get Real" program. Please note the following statistics:

- Teen mothers are 63% more likely to receive public assistance and face a lifetime of poverty.
- Teen mothers are 52% more likely NOT to receive a high school diploma, and of those who do, only 1.5% go on to earn a college degree. The lack of educational attainment is a leading driver for a life in poverty and reliance on public support systems.

Given the annual projection of savings to the State's General Fund of approximately \$1 million dollars, through reduction of reliance on public assistance and the prevention of future generations of poverty by reducing teen births, this is a priority budget item that must be supported to reduce poverty and the ever increasing financial demands at the local level.

Knowing and having benefited from the positive impacts of this program in Mesa County, we fully support the extension of this important program through HB15-1079 until the year 2020.

Respectfully,

Mesa County Board of Commissioners

Rose Pugliese, Chair


 John Justman


 Scott McInnis

cc: Senator Ray Scott
 Representative Dan Thurlow
 Representative Yeulin Willett