



March 21, 2026

Chair McCormick and Committee Members  
Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources Committee Members  
200 E. Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

*Submitted via online portal <https://sites.coleg.gov/public-testimony/sign-up-to-testify/step-2>*

**Re: Vote Yes on HB26-1310**

Dear Chair McCormick and Committee Members:

On behalf of myself, a Gunnison County resident, and our thousands of members and supporters across Colorado, please vote YES on HB26-1310. HB26-1310 is fiscally responsible and necessary, directing funds toward proven, cost-effective measures that are key to reducing structure loss and making homes as wildfire resilient as possible.

The Center for Biological Diversity (“Center”) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting imperiled species and the lands, waters, and climate on which both wildlife and people depend. The Center has a long history of advocating for forest and fire policies that prioritize community and infrastructure resilience, are grounded in sound science, and ensure when actions are taken on forested lands, they reduce risk rather than create new harms.

This bill is urgently needed for ensuring the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program achieves its mission of protecting life, property, and infrastructure, by directing new funding to build fire-adapted communities. The bill would allocate \$600,000 in FY 2028 and \$2 million in FY 2029 from the Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund to the Wildfire Resilient Home Grant Program, with priority for income-qualified homeowners and those unable to complete mitigation work due to age, disability, or illness. To date, less than \$60,000 has gone to home hardening grants, compared to \$6 million allocated annually to landscape resilience. This lopsided approach has left communities and the spaces where it matters the most for taking proactive fire-resilience actions, neglected and vulnerable. The legislature must help balance wildfire mitigation priorities to protect Coloradans and their homes, ensuring home hardening is treated as the essential safety pillar it is.

**Extensive wildfire research shows that structure loss—not fire on the landscape—is the primary driver of human harm and economic loss, particularly in the wildland-urban interface.** Higuera et al. 2023; Naser & Kodur 2025. In Colorado, structure-loss rates have risen by roughly 7% over the past two decades, with wildfires from human-caused ignitions destroying structures at rates ten times higher than lightning-caused fires because they occur closer to homes and in more flammable landscapes. Higuera et al. 2023. As climate change increases fuel aridity and

ignition days, expanding development will continue to amplify structure loss driven predominantly by human-related ignitions.

Higuera et al., 2023, identifies Colorado as a “low-burn, high-loss” fire regime, with disproportionately high structure loss despite relatively low area burned, driven largely by human-caused ignitions near homes and flammable vegetation late in the fire season. From 1999–2020, Colorado had the highest share of area burned from human-related ignitions of any Western state, consistent with fires starting close to structures. More than one-third of structure loss occurred in late summer and early fall under extreme fire weather, a pattern exemplified by the Marshall Fire, which became Colorado’s most destructive wildfire despite its relatively small size.

This bill is consistent with not only our lived experiences, but a key takeaway from Higuera et al., 2023, that we must be prioritizing fire-resistant construction, defensible space, and equitable access to these protections across communities.

This bill focuses on **proven measures that significantly reduce structure ignition risk**, including home hardening and defensible space. Peer-reviewed studies show that ignition-resistant construction and vegetation management within the immediate home ignition zone can reduce structure losses by **up to 50 percent**, even under extreme fire conditions. Cohen, 2000; ZamaniAlaei et al. 2025. Research consistently finds that it is not flame fronts or flame heights, that are the dominant cause of home ignition, but embers. Accordingly, building materials, vent screening, and near-home conditions are the most critical factors for home survival. Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety; Headwaters Economics 2024.

HB26-1310 correctly identifies the core challenge of wildfire risk in Colorado: **protecting people where they live**. By directing funding toward evidence-based, cost-effective measures that reduce structural vulnerability in and near homes and communities, the bill supports actions that are within our control and deliver measurable, fiscally responsible benefits.

As climate-driven fires grow more frequent and severe, wildfire policy has too often been shaped by fear rather than science. Large-scale commercial logging projects, often promoted as wildfire solutions, do little to protect homes. Commercial logging outside the home hardening zone has been documented to degrade forest health and biodiversity. *See e.g.* Lindenmayer et al., 2025; DellaSala et al., 2025. And, in some cases, they even increase long-term fire risk by drying forests, altering microclimates, introducing invasive and noxious weeds, and degrading ecosystems, as is particularly the case when these actions occur far from communities. *See e.g.* Calkin et al., 2023; Thompson et al., 2007. By contrast, investments in community-level resilience, as this bill directs, consistently show the strongest returns for public safety and cost reduction. Headwaters Economics 2024; FEMA 2025.

We cannot eliminate fire from fire-adapted landscapes, nor should we. We can, however, and must take evidence-based actions that meaningfully reduce harm to communities and infrastructure. HB26-1310 does exactly that. For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to vote YES.

Sincerely,



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## References

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March 22, 2026

RE: HB26-1310 Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money

Dear Chair McCormick:

My name is Daniel Bowker, and I am the Forests Program Director at the Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed (CPRW) in Fort Collins. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit, with a mission to improve and maintain the ecological health of the Poudre River Watershed through community collaboration. I am writing in opposition to HB26-1310 Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money, on behalf of CPRW.

We know that home hardening and defensible space mitigation work is a critical piece of the wildfire resilience puzzle. But it is not sufficient alone. Without effective landscape-level forest management on all lands, hardened homes and defensible space will be overwhelmed by extreme fire behavior, transmitted from wildlands to the wildland-urban interface.

As a direct example from my region, the 2020 Cameron Peak Fire traveled 35 linear miles, from 10,000 feet in the Rawah Wilderness, to the community of Masonville near Horsetooth Reservoir. A hardened home in this fire's path did not stand much of a chance without landscape-level forest management. The recent short film *Fireforest* tells this story extremely well. Fire intensity from the approaching fire front was effectively moderated by a large-scale 2,000-acre US Forest Service prescribed fire, then burned into a 117-acre mechanized forestry treatment completed by the Larimer Conservation District, one of our Northern Colorado Fireshed Partners. This landscape-scale forestry treatment caused the fire to drop out of the canopy onto the ground, where firefighters were able to stop its advance. Without this critical landscape-scale forestry work, the fire would most likely have reached the community of Glacier View Meadows, burning at high intensity. This would have been a devastating outcome for that community, whether or not all of their structures were properly hardened and their properties defensible.

To complete forestry treatments such as this one, Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative partners make use of critical state funding sources like the Department of Natural Resources' Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP), and the Colorado State Forest Service's Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Program. Without these funds, forestry projects such as the above are not possible. The state exhausts both of these funds yearly, with scores of excellent projects left unfunded statewide. Diverting funding from COSWAP to fund home hardening will mean that even more of these effective landscape-scale forest management projects go undone.

CPRW and the Larimer County Office of Emergency Management have recently partnered on a five-year, \$9.7 million US Department of Agriculture Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG), which explicitly recognizes the need for community-level prioritization and implementation of "front porch to the forest" treatments such as home



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ignition zone and evacuation route/fuelbreak work, along with treating the acres in between. However, we know our community- and parcel-level treatments will never be effective without the landscape-level forest management work done on larger federal, state, local, and private lands. Our strategy with this grant anchors our community-level treatments on larger-acreage treatments to build effective resilience across the landscape. Neither is sufficient alone; both the large acres and the smaller community-level treatments work together for effective wildfire preparedness and resilience.

Further, the built environment is only one of multiple values we and our partners are seeking to build resilience around. Wildlife habitat, water quality and water delivery infrastructure, recreation assets, wood products, all of these are critically important values in our watersheds and to our communities. Hardened homes and defensible space do nothing to protect these values. Only landscape-scale forest management addresses these effectively. Insured, hardened homes, efficient evacuation routes, and effective wildfire suppression tactics are essential. But if surrounding larger-acreage forested areas burn at high severity and in totality, this is not a pleasant environment to return to after the fire with these other vital values degraded, regardless of whether the structures survive.

Finally, along with landscape-level forestry treatments, COSWAP also funds critical workforce development projects, and these workforce development projects treat priority acres as well. Without the conservation corps crews and the skills and leadership training provided through funding sources like COSWAP, projects such as our CWDG project would be at a severe deficit in skilled personnel and common vision to implement the community-level treatments we intend.

Thank you Chair McCormick and the members of the House Agriculture, Water, & Natural Resources Committee. I urge you to find alternate ways to fund home hardening and defensible space work, without taking away from essential landscape-scale forest management and workforce development grant funding that we and our partners rely on to make our forests, homes and infrastructure, and other watershed values more resilient to wildfire.

Sincerely,

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March 12, 2026

RE: HB26-1310 Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money

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RE: HB26-1310

As a longstanding partner working closely on development, outreach, and mentoring development and implementation of DNR's Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program and DFPC's Wildfire Resilient Homes Grant, and as an ear to the ground with 280+ active wildfire resilience professionals from around Colorado in Fire Adapted Colorado's network, I have a few questions and ideas to strengthen HB26-1310.

I love the idea of continuing some home-hardening support for Colorado WUI residents, focusing on lower-income individuals—a true need. However, it looks like this might undermine the funding program that currently enables significant wildfire mitigation workforce training and landscape treatments through the Department of DNR, maybe making that severance tax allocation **convert entirely** to the home hardening grants in a few years. I believe DNR's Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program, supported by the Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund, has been a very important funding source for wildfire risk reduction projects around the state. Some environmental groups have seized on this idea that the problem isn't the woods - it is the built environment, is a false dichotomy. While structures that don't ignite, won't burn down, we are actively seeing the impacts of overstocked, out of whack forests with the mountain pine beetle infestation on the front range, and I think you are all aware of the other devastating impacts of high intensity fires that nuke landscapes, cost millions in water treatment and flood mitigation, and washout roads and interstates. The projects implemented through COSWAP and other state investments in hazardous fuels reduction are an important piece of how we can coexist with wildfires in Colorado.

By shifting the funding structure slightly, I think you could accomplish a standing investment in the DFPC Wildfire Resilient Homes Grant program AND maintain the important work through correctional and youth corps crews occurring with DNR COSWAP. For instance, instead of progressively larger cuts of a shrinking pot of COSWAP investment, allocate 10-20% of Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund to support DFPC's Wildfire Resilient Homes Grant program. If there's concern about how COSWAP is being used, I'd add that taking from their 'priority landscapes' pool versus the 'capacity and training' pool could rebalance some of these funds from those communities with the most existing mitigation capacity in the COSWAP priority landscapes to low-income WUI residents throughout the state.

Regarding the Wildfire Resilient Homes Grant program (WRHG): There was also nearly half the funding left on the table from DFPC's pilot year of the WRHG program that they couldn't access to fund further worthwhile home-hardening projects. If you're working to improve how home-hardening investments are made in Colorado, a couple small tweaks to the WRHG enabling legislation would be very helpful, too, like not being exclusive to individual household rebates, which are extremely cumbersome for a state agency to manage, and enabling DFPC to carryover AND USE any unspent funds from one year to the next. There was something statutorily preventing them from directly funding home hardening projects after the initial WPHG



program year. Even though there were still funds allocated into a reserved account, I was told they didn't have the spending authority to use it, and that would take an act of Congress.

Investments in home hardening are much needed and appropriate, but completely undermining a successful hazardous fuels reduction program for minor games that won't begin to scratch the surface of funding needs for home hardening feels like more of an attack on forest health and hazardous fuels reduction treatment than a solution that will keep homes from burning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,  
Becca S.

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March 12, 2026

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TO: Members of the Agriculture, Water, and Natural Resources Committee.  
RE: Support for HB26-1310  
DATE: March 23, 2026

Dear Rep. Story and members of the Committee,

I am sorry I could not testify in person today, but I write this letter to support HB 26-1310.

I have reviewed information on various aspects of forest management, primarily in Colorado, for the last 45 years and worked hard to protect and maintain our forests. Forests are essential for all life on earth – from micro-organisms to charismatic animals like elk and black bear. They are also critically important for storing carbon and reducing the possible impacts for climate change. It is vitally important that we maintain our forests.

At the same time, fire, especially in a warming climate, is a considerable threat to homes and other infrastructure that lie within or adjacent to forests. I believe HB-1310 is good for our forests and for protecting structures.

Research conducted by the U. S. Forest Service and others shows that fires do not directly ignite structures (even one purely constructed with wood) from a distance of more than 30 meters (98 feet). Structures can still be ignited by burning embers from fires some distance away, but if the home and surrounding area are protected, burning embers will not likely be able to ignite the home or any other structure. Thus removing flammable material from homes and the immediately adjacent area, i. e., “hardening” the home, will provide a high level of protection from any wildfire.

HB 1310 would directly address this issue by moving some money from the Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund to the Wildfire Resilient Homes Grant Program. The former fund does not provide money for home hardening, while the latter is specifically designed to give grants “for structure hardening in order to make them more resilient to wildfire risk”. (C. R. S. 24-33.5-1239 (2)(a))

In awarding grants, HB 26 1310 also would order the Division of Fire Prevention and Control to prioritize awarding grants to low-income homeowners and those physically unable to perform the work needed to harden a home. This will help ensure that all property owners will have an opportunity to harden their homes and related structures.

In short, HB 26-1310 would put money where it is most effective in reducing home susceptibility to fire. For this reason, we respectfully request that the Committee pass this bill.

I am happy to respond to any questions you may have. Please contact me by phone or e-mail, per below.

Thank you,  
Rocky Smith, Forest Management Consultant  
1030 North Pearl St. #9

Denver, CO 80203  
303 839-5900  
2rocksmith@gmail.com

Good afternoon Madame Chair and honorable members of this committee, I am Larimer County Commissioner Jody Shaddock-McNally, I am here at as an individual commissioner who works in the wildfire space with my appointment to the Colorado Forest Health council and my work in partnership with many agencies and non government groups in mitigation and resilience building.

My gratitude to Representative Story for her long term efforts in wildfire matters. However, I am here today to testify in opposition to HB 1310.

Without effective landscape-level forest management on all lands, hardened homes and defensible space will be overwhelmed by extreme fire behavior, transmitted from wildlands to the WUI.

The Cameron Peak Fire traveled 35 linear miles, from 11,000' in the wilderness, to Masonville near my home in unincorporated Larimer County. A hardened home in its path would not stand a chance without edlandscape-level forest management. Fire intensity from the approaching Cameron Peak fire front was effectively moderated by large-scale USFS prescribed fire, then hit a mechanical treatment completed by agencies or NGOs where the fire dropped out of the canopy onto the ground, and firefighters were able to catch it there. Without these treatments, the fire most likely would have reached neighborhoods in Larimer County with hundreds of homes.

To complete treatments like the one described above, several groups and partners use critical funding sources like COSWAP and FRWRM. Larimer County has received over \$14 million in critical funding over the time this program has been in place. The state exhausts these funds yearly, with scores of excellent projects left unfunded statewide. Taking away half of this funding by any means even more of these effective projects go unfunded. Placing unintended conflict between two very important programs does not fit the shared stewardship value I believe in and one I think we all appreciate. We need both but not at the decrease in resources and expense for proven work through these programs.

Thank you, please vote no.

Larimer County Commissioner Jody Shaddock-McNally

**House Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources**

**03/23/2026 01:30 PM**

**HB26-1310 Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money**

**Typed Text of Testimony Submitted**

<b>Name, Position, Representing</b>	<b>Typed Text of Testimony</b>
Rene Fuentes Against themselves	Do you have any idea the negative impact this will have not only on the environment of Colorado, but the number of jobs affected? We cannot afford to cut this funding, even having a conversation about cutting 88 percent of it over 5 years is crazy. Too much is at stake !!!!
Christel Markevich For themselves	<p>Hi,</p> <p>Scientists like Jack Cohen and his colleagues at the US Forest Service found that high-intensity flames more than 100 feet away from a house are largely incapable of igniting the house directly (see <a href="https://www.elementalfilm.com/jackcohen">https://www.elementalfilm.com/jackcohen</a>). Ambers and firebrands are responsible for igniting the house. Their work shows that the 100 feet closest to a house is the critical zone for landscape fire mitigation (see <a href="https://wildfirepartners.org/resources/wildfire-mitigation-basics/">https://wildfirepartners.org/resources/wildfire-mitigation-basics/</a>).</p> <p>Science demonstrates that home hardening is vital, yet it is underfunded. At the same time, large sums are invested in forest thinning projects, even though residents of Colorado question some of these projects because the latest science does not support them.</p> <p>Incrementally reallocate a percentage of wildfire mitigation funds, which currently support the COSWAP program's landscape thinning and forest restoration projects, to the Wildfire Resilient Homes Grant Program is crucial to keep our community safe.</p> <p>We have to remember that the forest beyond 100 feet from our homes plays a critical role in keeping the soil shaded, cooling it, retaining moisture, and thus protecting us from drought, and helping prevent wildfires. These trees, 100 feet from our homes, absorb water to prevent erosion and protect the residents in the plains from flooding. By releasing the stored water through transpiration, they cool the environment, helping shield us from heatwaves. During this process, trees also emit bacteria that form clouds and trigger precipitation locally or elsewhere. In extreme weather conditions, trees slow down the wind. Finally, this forest provides habitat for</p>

	<p>wildlife and well-being for all of us. The forest beyond 100 feet from our homes helps cool the planet and supports biodiversity.</p> <p>Please support HB26-1310, as home hardening should be a greater focus and better funded.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p> <p>Best,                  Christel Markevich                  Nederland, CO</p>
<p>Thomas Veblen                  For                  himself</p>	<p>I am writing in support of adoption of HB26-1310: Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money.</p> <p>This bill addresses the serious need to provide support to residents to live more safely in fire-prone areas through home hardening and the creation of defensible space.</p> <p>My support for HB26-1310 is based on my more than 40 years of conducting forest ecological research, especially on wildfire, in Colorado forests. Our peer-reviewed research publications in leading forest science and ecological science journals have been cited 1000s of times. My expertise on topics related to wildfire and how our society needs to coexist with wildfire has been recognized by the 100s of outreach presentations I have made at professional and public events organized by the Colorado State Forest Service, the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, City and County Open Space and Park administrations, the National Park Service, and the USDA Forest Service.</p> <p>Based on my expertise on the subject, I attest that the scientific literature on adapting to wildfire risk unanimously concludes that the most effective strategy for reducing home loss to wildfire is through home hardening and creation of defensible space. Scientific research has repeatedly demonstrated that these “fire wise” procedures are far more effective than strategies based on fuel thinning and prescribed burning at sites distant from homes.</p> <p>I strongly support HB26-310.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted by                  Thomas T. Veblen, Ph.D.</p>

<p>Nicholas Scritchfield None themselves</p>	<p>Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Colorado Boulder</p> <p>Dear Chair and Members of the House Agriculture, Water, and Natural Resources Committee,</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill. As a former Park Ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park, a forest advocate, and an Estes Park resident, I support science-based approaches to reducing wildfire risk near structures. Decades of research, including the work of U.S. Forest Service scientist, Jack Cohen, show that structure loss is driven by conditions within the home ignition zone (0-100 feet), where embers, radiant heat, and nearby vegetation determine whether homes ignite. Treatments outside of this zone do not meaningfully influence structure survival nor improve forest health, yet the vast majority of funding continues to support logging and fuels reduction projects that focus outside of the home ignition zone, failing to protect communities.</p> <p>Given this, I urge the Committee to align state funding used for wildfire resilience activities with the best available evidence by directing 100% of the Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund toward grants for home hardening and defensible space within the home ignition zone. This includes ignition-resistant materials, ember-resistant vents, and reducing flammable materials immediately around structures—measures proven to reduce home loss. Continuing to fund fuels reduction efforts outside of the home ignition zone is not only ineffective, but a misallocation of limited public resources. A focused investment in structure-level mitigation is the most effective and responsible path to protecting Colorado’s communities while preserving natural ecological processes and healthy forest ecosystems.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Nicholas Scritchfield</p>
<p>Brien Webster Against Conservation Colorado</p>	<p>Madam Chair and members of the committee,</p> <p>My name is Brien Webster, and I am the Senior Public Lands Campaign Manager for Conservation Colorado. I am here today in respectful opposition to House Bill 1310.</p> <p>Conservation Colorado appreciates the bill sponsors’ efforts and supports increasing funding for home hardening. There is a real challenge here to be solved. Making structures more resilient to wildfire, especially for our lower-income and vulnerable communities, is important.</p> <p>However, we cannot support legislation that pits home hardening against the health of our forests and watersheds. Instead of expanding total capacity, this bill creates an untenable zero-sum dynamic by sweeping vital funds away from landscape-scale mitigation and the highly effective Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP).</p>

	<p>Furthermore, the funding mechanism in this bill contains a concerning structural element. By perpetually capping COSWAP and tying future appropriations to a shrinking percentage of the prior year's spending, this bill initiates a downward funding spiral. Over the next decade, this compounding reduction will systematically deplete both COSWAP and the Wildfire Resilient Homes Grant Program, severely diminishing our state's overall capacity to mitigate the impacts of wildfire.</p> <p>Climate change is driving prolonged droughts and year-round wildfire seasons. The risk to our communities, forests, and watersheds is not going to diminish over the next decade, and our state's funding to bolster resilience against these threats certainly should not either.</p> <p>We urge a no vote on this bill to protect our state's comprehensive approach to wildfire resilience. Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>
<p>Nicholas Scritchfield For themselves</p>	<p>Dear Chair and Members of the House Agriculture, Water, and Natural Resources Committee,</p> <p>I am uploading my testimony again because the "position on the hearing item" section initially uploaded as "neutral" when I intended to click "for" to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill. As a former Park Ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park, a forest advocate, and an Estes Park resident, I support science-based approaches to reducing wildfire risk near structures. Decades of research, including the work of U.S. Forest Service scientist, Jack Cohen, show that structure loss is driven by conditions within the home ignition zone (0-100 feet), where embers, radiant heat, and nearby vegetation determine whether homes ignite. Treatments outside of this zone do not meaningfully influence structure survival nor improve forest health, yet the vast majority of funding continues to support logging and fuels reduction projects that focus outside of the home ignition zone, failing to protect communities.</p> <p>Given this, I urge the Committee to align state funding used for wildfire resilience activities with the best available evidence by directing 100% of the Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund toward grants for home hardening and defensible space within the home ignition zone. This includes ignition-resistant materials, ember-resistant vents, and reducing flammable materials immediately around structures – measures proven to reduce home loss. Continuing to fund fuels reduction efforts outside of the home ignition zone is not only ineffective, but a misallocation of limited public resources. A focused investment in structure-level mitigation is the most effective and responsible path to protecting Colorado's communities while preserving natural ecological processes and healthy forest ecosystems.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Nicholas Scritchfield</p>

<p>Claire Morrissy Against Mile High Youth Corps</p>	<p>On behalf of Mile High Youth Corps, I am writing in opposition to the appropriation of funds from the Department of Natural Resources' Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) towards home hardening efforts. For over 30 years, Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC) has been empowering Colorado youth to positively impact their communities while they gain the job experience and industry recognized certificates in natural resources management.</p> <p>Since 2021, COSWAP funding has been utilized by municipalities, fire protection districts, and non-profit land management agencies to implement fuel reduction projects that will decrease the likelihood and severity of extreme wildfires. Through the Workforce Development program, COSWAP is employing conservation youth corps to complete effective on-the-ground treatments, such as the strategic removal of unhealthy and vulnerable trees, that are a necessary component of landscape-level wildfire reduction.</p> <p>Thanks to COSWAP, 237 young people have served on COSWAP-funded projects with MHYC, and 24 received advanced chainsaw skills training. On COSWAP worksites, MHYC Corpsmembers learn the soft and hard skills needed to prepare for them careers such as wildland firefighting while connecting them to community members, land management professionals, and wildfire practitioners, who are working collaboratively to solve our state's wildfire crisis. Reducing COSWAP funding threatens to reduce this vital wildland firefighting training pathway.</p> <p>Please consider retaining COSWAP funding for its original use and ensuring the perpetuation of the wildland firefighting workforce in Colorado.</p>
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**Subject:** Opposition to HB26-1310 – Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money  
**Date:** March 13, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the House Agriculture, Water and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Kent Maxwell, fire & forestry coordinator for Colorado Firecamp, a non-profit wildland firefighter school in Salida. I proudly served 33 years as a volunteer firefighter, station captain, and battalion chief with the Chaffee County Fire Protection District. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 26-1310.

Colorado Firecamp has partnered with the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) to implement wildfire mitigation projects across Chaffee County. These projects deploy AmeriCorps youth conservation corps and inmate firefighter crews to reduce hazardous fuels around communities, along evacuation routes, and within critical watersheds identified in the Chaffee County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Through COSWAP workforce development grants, our Firecamp Community Forestry projects have removed ladder fuels, thinned dense forests, constructed and burned slash piles. We have created shaded fuel breaks protecting homes and infrastructure in the wildland-urban interface. The work directly improves firefighter safety and reduces the likelihood of high-intensity crown fires in areas where communities meet public lands.

A defining strength of COSWAP is its dual mission: it funds meaningful fuels reduction projects while simultaneously training the next generation of Colorado's wildfire mitigation workforce. Participants receive training and experience in chainsaw operations, fuels mitigation, prescribed fire, and wildland firefighting—skills that are critically needed as the state faces growing wildfire risk.

HB26-1310 proposes to redirect most COSWAP funding to home hardening grants. While home hardening is an important component of wildfire resilience, it cannot replace landscape-scale fuels reduction and workforce development.

*“keeping quality in qualification”*

Wildfire behavior is driven by the condition of surrounding forests and fuels; without strategic mitigation across landscapes, homes remain vulnerable regardless of individual property improvements. Homes are also not the only assets at risk from catastrophic wildfire. High-severity fires can destabilize entire watersheds, leading to severe post-fire flooding, debris flows, and long-term damage to municipal water supplies, irrigation systems, roads, and other critical infrastructure.

Communities across Colorado have seen how burned hillsides can produce devastating floods for years after a fire, threatening lives, and causing millions of dollars in downstream damage. Strategic fuels reduction programs like COSWAP help reduce the intensity of wildfires across larger landscapes, which in turn protects watersheds, infrastructure, and entire communities—not just individual homes.

Reducing COSWAP funding by half—and eventually by nearly ninety percent—would significantly diminish Colorado’s ability to carry out proactive fuels reduction and build the skilled workforce required to sustain that work.

In my experience working directly on mitigation projects and wildfire training in Chaffee County, COSWAP has been one of the most effective programs the state has implemented to address wildfire risk on a scale that meets the challenge.

I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB26-1310 and maintain strong support for the COSWAP program. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent Maxwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kent Maxwell,  
fire & forestry coordinator



**Subject:** Opposition to HB26-1310 – Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money  
**Date:** March 13, 2026

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent Maxwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kent Maxwell,  
fire & forestry coordinator

March 22, 2026

Dear Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources House Committee,

As the Director of the Larimer County Conservation Corps (LCCC), I like to share my opposition to HB26-1310 Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money. This bill has real potential to weaken the state's overall safety infrastructure and disrupt the economic sectors tied to forest management.

As an implementor of forest mitigation work across the northern region, I feel the state should prioritize the continuation of programs like COSWAP that focuses on landscape-scale efforts while also prioritizing private landowners to increase efforts of home hardening to parallel efforts. In Larimer County we have used both COSWAP and Community Wildfire Defense Grants to focus on both efforts as models to duplicate across the state's high priority areas.

In 2025, the LCCC completed 55-weeks of mitigation projects and hired 95 corpsmembers that joined the natural resource workforce. From Lyons to Estes Park, from Red Feather Lakes to Loveland, had critical treatments completed across their communities. The COSWAP funding ensures our state has a trained and experienced workforce of mitigation specialists and responders.

Home hardening and defensible space work is critical. But it is not effective alone. Without effective landscape-level forest management on all lands, hardened homes and defensible space will be overwhelmed by extreme fire behavior, transmitted from wildlands to the WUI. The Cameron Peak Fire traveled 35 linear miles then hit a mechanical treatment losing momentum allowing fire fighters to gain an upper hand on the fire. Without these treatments our state will continue to experience record breaking fires.

We've seen DFPC manage a pilot home hardening grant that was only able to deliver \$50,000 of the \$100,000 allocated. In comparison to the number of requests for COSWAP funding each cycle and the immediate impacts only goes to show the success of DNR's management of COSWAP funding and why these funds are so important to the management of the state's resources.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to express my concern about the irreversible impacts of redirecting COSWAP funding to private residential home hardening through HB26-1310. Feel free to contact me directly to further discuss my concerns.

Sincerely,

Maelly Oropeza  
Director  
Larimer County Conservation Corps



To the Honorable Committee Members of the House Agriculture, Water and Natural Resource Committee:

This letter is in response to House Bill 26-1310, Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money. I am a local forester on the Front Range of Colorado & I have interacted with the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Plan (COSWAP) in recent years including the upcoming season.

**I strongly oppose House Bill 26-1310** as it represents a disingenuous means to strip grant funding opportunities housed within the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and cutting off a primary means for local landowners and land managers to reduce wildfire risk for whole communities and restore forest health at a landscape scale. These funds have been successfully utilized to implement defensible space projects, large swaths of forest health restoration on previously unhealthy forests and improve watershed resiliency & reduce the risk of catastrophic crown fire through thinning projects. I implore state representatives to allow COSWAP to continue to be successful and benefiting multitudes of Colorado residents and communities.

Forest health restoration, defensible space, and home hardening create a collaborative triangle of reducing wildfire risk in Colorado. All three aspects are important to protecting homes, communities, and watersheds. Creating a healthier forest near and around communities can improve the chances for fire suppression efforts to be successful in the event of a wildfire. Creating a healthier forest near and around communities can give residents more time during evacuation due to wildfire.

Zeroing out funding for two means of mitigation (*forest health restoration & defensible space*) to fund one means (*home hardening*) does not help Coloradans. The members of the state legislature need to find a productive and sustainable way of funding all aspects of this triangle. While funding home hardening is a positive direction, it isolates large amounts of funding for too small of a footprint and is not wisely appropriating state funds. Spending \$30,000 on re-siding one home with non-combustible siding can instead go towards creating strategic fuels reduction around the entirety of a neighborhood or miles of an evacuation route.

Please consider this feedback before reclassifying monies in the wildfire mitigation capacity development fund to the wildfire resilient homes grant program. I implore state representatives to find less harmful and more sustainable ways to support Coloradans as we all navigate the elevated risk of wildfire and the unique responsibility of managing our natural resources.

Sincerely,

Brian Maillett

Toby Stensland  
8293 Bell Ranch Rd  
Evergreen, CO 80439

March 23, 2026

### **Against HB26-1310 - Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money**

I live in Evergreen, CO, and I am against this bill. This bill takes money away from forest management and moves it to hardening individual houses. My neighbors hardening their houses, does not help with my top wildfire related concerns. Rather, I want my neighbors to do more forest management.

#### **My #1 Wildfire Concern: Living in a moonscape.**

The worst case scenario for me, is that a Haman-type fire burns Evergreen, sanitizing the soil and turning our area into a moonscape for the remainder of my life. Forest management is a positive for this concern, and home hardening has no impact on this concern.

#### **My #2 Wildfire Concern: Ability to safely evacuate.**

The ability to evacuate humans, pets and livestock, is probably the most important thing related to wildfire, but I have planned for it so it is my #2 concern rather than #1. Forest management is a positive for this concern, and home hardening has no impact on this concern.

#### **My #3 Wildfire Concern: Cost of home insurance.**

Because of wildfire concerns, we have fewer companies offering insurance in Evergreen, and with lack of competition comes higher prices. More of my neighbors hardening their houses could have derivative effects on insurance, positive and negative, but does not directly tackle the insurance problem.

Thank you for your time and your service to the State of Colorado,

Toby Stensland

[toby@stensland.com](mailto:toby@stensland.com)



*Promoting the long-term sustainable use and protection of natural resources in the Mancos River Watershed through educational, technical, and financial assistance for residents and landowners.*

Date: March 22, 2026

To: Members of the House Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources Committee

Re: Opposition to HB26-1310 - Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money

Submitted by: Danny Margoles

Representing: Mancos Conservation District

Email: [danny@mancoscd.org](mailto:danny@mancoscd.org)

Chair McCormick and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express the Mancos Conservation District's opposition to HB26-1310 - Wildfire Resiliency Grant Money.

The MCD serves residents and landowners within Montezuma County with natural resource technical and financial assistance and educational resources, including wildfire risk mitigation and forest restoration activities.

Since 2022, the MCD has received funding through the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) to reduce wildfire risk and enhance resilience at a landscape scale within southwest Colorado. The MCD currently manages four COSWAP Landscape Resilience Investment (LRI) projects - two of which the MCD leads in Montezuma County and two of which the MCD manages as a fiscal agent (one in Montezuma County and one in La Plata County).

MCD managed COSWAP projects include a variety of actions to strategically reduce wildfire risk to lives, property, and critical infrastructure and enhance landscape resilience. These include defensible space work (clearing vegetation around homes), fuel breaks to allow ingress/egress for residents and emergency personnel, strategic forest thinning, pile burning, and broadcast prescribed burning. The ability to tailor appropriate actions within our communities is vital to reducing risk across the landscape. The two MCD managed projects will complete work on 1,635 acres.

The MCD opposes HB26-1310 because we believe it will (1) substantially reduce landscape scale wildfire risk reduction investments and actions and (2) diminish valuable shared stewardship planning and project implementation.

1. HB26-1310 would reduce wildfire risk reduction investments and actions that were locally developed to best protect lives, property, and critical infrastructure and resources.
  - o MCD COSWAP projects are being completed in priority community areas identified by: state agencies (CO State Forest Service, CO Division of Fire Prevention and Control), federal agencies (US Forest Service, BLM), Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, local government

- (Montezuma County, Town of Mancos, water districts), nonprofits, and other community members.
- The \$2 million from COSWAP that the MCD directly manages has been leveraged to secure >\$5 million in additional state and federal funding. This direct and leveraged funding has profoundly benefitted Montezuma County residents through landscape-scale wildfire risk reduction.
2. HB26-1310 would diminish the effectiveness of shared stewardship activities in SW Colorado.
- MCD's COSWAP projects were collaboratively developed and have enabled consistent technical project planning across local, state, tribal, and federal agencies to work directly across management boundaries.
  - COSWAP filled a critical gap in planning and implementation on private lands and tribal ranch lands where need is high, but capacity was low. There is now a private lands forestry program to address high risk wildfire areas in Montezuma County.
  - COSWAP's Landscape Resilience Investment importantly works in tandem with other shared stewardship efforts like the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program to focus actions and alter fire behavior at a strategic and meaningful scale to protect communities and critical infrastructure.

The MCD recognizes home hardening as an important element to wildfire resilience. We are opposed, however, to diverting funds from strategic landscape-scale risk reduction for that purpose. Building resilient landscapes requires multiple strategies and many partners across agencies and jurisdictions to reduce wildfire risk. We fear that HB26-1310 would weaken those relationships and unnecessarily constrain the types of actions required to reduce wildfire risk across our landscape, particularly during a period of extended drought.

For these reasons, we respectfully request the committee votes no on HB26-1310.

Sincerely,



Danny Margoles  
Executive Director  
Mancos Conservation District



**TEENS, Inc.**

[www.teensinc.org](http://www.teensinc.org)

(303) 258-3821 | P.O. Box 1070 | 151 East Street | Nederland, CO 80466

## Testimony Opposing HB26-1310

Dear Members of the Colorado Legislature,

TEENS, Inc. respectfully urges you to vote **against HB26-1310**.

TEENS, Inc. is a youth development nonprofit serving Colorado communities by supporting, educating, and empowering young people to make healthy choices and thrive. One of our flagship programs, TeamWorks, connects youth to nature, conservation careers, and their communities.

Now entering its 16th year, TeamWorks hires 72 youth each summer to complete trail maintenance, wildfire mitigation, and noxious weed removal on public lands across the Front Range. As a 21st Century Conservation Corps and member of the Corps Network, the program provides well-paid summer jobs while building workforce skills, leadership, and environmental stewardship among youth from underserved communities.

TeamWorks partners with agencies such as Jefferson County Open Space, Boulder Mountain Fire District, Four Mile Fire District, Jefferson Conservation District, and the Four Mile Watershed Coalition. Much of our wildfire mitigation work is supported by the Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund through COSWAP. These funds are essential because they address wildfire risk at its source - unhealthy, overcrowded forests - while simultaneously training the next generation of land stewards.

For example, through the Crescent Meadows Project, our crews are building strategic fire breaks near Gross Reservoir in areas inaccessible to machinery. **A major fire in this corridor - near rail lines, high-voltage power lines, and natural gas infrastructure - could threaten clean water access for up to 1.5 million people in the Denver metro area.**

While home hardening is an important strategy, redirecting funds away from forest health and mitigation would be a serious mistake. Preventing catastrophic wildfire requires proactive landscape management, including thinning overcrowded forests and creating strategic fire breaks. Without these efforts, home hardening alone will not prevent widespread loss during large wildfires. We encourage you to find a different funding source for this home hardening project.

Equally important, these programs develop the future workforce in forest management and wildfire resilience. As one TeamWorks participant shared: *"At the beginning of the summer I didn't think much about the nature around me. Now I actually care about it."*

Programs like TeamWorks protect our landscapes, strengthen communities, and prepare the next generation to address Colorado's wildfire challenges. We urge you to **maintain funding for proactive mitigation and workforce programs** by voting **NO on HB26-1310**.

Sincerely,

Ariel Gustafson

TEENS, Inc. Out of School Director

[www.teamworkscolorado.org](http://www.teamworkscolorado.org)

[ariel@teensinc.org](mailto:ariel@teensinc.org)