



## COLORADO

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June 21, 2018

The Honorable Paul Gosar, Chairman  
United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Testimony of Rose Pugliese, Mesa County (Colorado) Commissioner before the House Subcommittee on Natural Resources on Thursday, June 21, 2018, regarding the Education and Energy Act (H.R. 5859).

Dear Chairman Gosar, Ranking Member Lowenthal and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Rose Pugliese, and I am a Commissioner in Mesa County, Colorado. I am here to offer support on behalf of the Board of Mesa County Commissioners regarding the Education and Energy Act (H.R. 5859).

There are significant energy resources in our western Colorado counties. Mesa County is 72% federal lands. We are so grateful that you have reached out to our county and other communities in western Colorado to discuss how to distribute a portion of the federal government's revenues from federal mineral and geothermal leases back to communities to supplement K-12 grade education, and higher education, in order to improve our collective local economies.

Mesa County is home to approximately 150,000 people and is known as the hub of the energy industry in western Colorado. Many of the energy industry workforce and suppliers, and their families live in Mesa County while they work in surrounding counties. Mesa County receives approximately \$796,000 annually in revenue from Federal Mineral Lease (FML) dollars. Mesa County, along with our neighbor, Garfield County, have each established a Federal Mineral Lease District, which allows FML dollars to be distributed to special districts in our community with the greatest needs, such as fire districts, sanitation districts, school districts, higher education institutions and municipalities. Funds from the Mesa County FML District helped fund Colorado Mesa University's (CMU) Unconventional Energy Center, which is used for research and advocacy of important projects in our community, such as the Jordan Cove project.

As a County Commissioner, I sit on all of the economic development boards in Mesa County and have worked closely on developing programs and state legislation to help enhance economic development opportunities for Mesa County. Investing tax dollars into K-12 education and higher education, especially through our community colleges, with an emphasis on career exploration and apprenticeships, will provide economic development benefits that can help mitigate the fluctuations in the mineral extraction industry.

Additionally, investing in future workforce programming will provide our western Colorado communities with a powerful and lasting economic development tool with which to diversify the local economies and attract more jobs to our communities. Mesa County has three school districts: De Beque School District 49-JT, Plateau Valley 50 School District and Mesa County Valley School District 51. Ensuring that our

future workforce has the skills needed to meet the demands of business and industry must start with career exploration at an early age.

There is a skills gap that can be addressed with this additional funding. Almost 50% of Mesa County Valley School District 51's graduating class, for instance, had no plans to pursue the military or post-secondary education. Yet nationally, over the next decade, according to an [analysis by Deloitte Consulting LLP and the Manufacturing Institute](#), almost 3.5 million manufacturing jobs will be created, and it is estimated only 1.5 million people will have the skills to do these primary jobs that are vital to our local and national economies.

The tools needed to introduce these students to skilled trades which are most in demand in Mesa County today are not readily available in our K-12 school system. By way of example, makers' spaces which have been shown to be highly effective at demonstrating students in elementary and middle school the relevance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) classes in the real world. Maker's spaces are now available in six of our 44 schools and were funded through one of our community foundations. Imagine the potential if we could fund a maker's space in every school or at least a 3-D printer and a well-trained teacher to integrate these technologies into the classroom.

CMU started an Innovation Center on campus and has recently opened its new Engineering building so that they can help students fully develop the skills needed in STEM programs. CMU partnered with the Math and Science Center to co-locate their facility in the Engineering building so that children as young as three years old can get hands-on engagement in STEM programs. One of those 3-year-olds is my son who attended a summer camp with my 6-year-old at the John McConnell Math and Science Center.

Funding from this legislation could facilitate that process and with higher education leave a lasting workforce legacy in our communities for our businesses and our residents. Once interest in these skills and the careers that utilize them is established, the K-12 system in collaboration, can provide a seamless pathway to industry certifications and advanced degrees.

In consultation with a few counties in western Colorado in preparing my testimony for today's hearing, there was a concern raised about these additional FML dollars going directly to the state for distribution. In Colorado, we have seen firsthand how severance tax has been raided to balance the state budget. We have also seen the underfunding of K-12 education and higher education. We respectfully suggest that an amendment be considered on this Bill to return a portion of the federal share of FML dollars directly to the regions of origin of the FML dollars. This will help ensure that the communities generating these revenues will be the recipient of the additional funding needed for our K-12 education systems and higher education institutions.

The Mesa County, Colorado, Board of Commissioners supports Education and Energy Act (H.R. 5859). Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments on behalf of Mesa County, and I look forward to your questions.

Sincerely,



Rose Pugliese  
Mesa County, Colorado  
Commissioner