

# Mesa County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Stan Hilkey

215 Rice Street  
P.O. Box 20,000  
Grand Junction, Co. 81502

970-244-3500 Phone  
970-244-3503 Fax  
www.sheriff.mesacounty.us



April 9, 2013

Honorable Chairman Lucia Guzman  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Colorado General Assembly  
Denver, CO 80203

Re: HB13-1236

Dear Chairman Guzman and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of County Sheriffs of Colorado in support of HB13-1236. I also speak to you today as representative of Mesa County's Evidence Based Decision Making initiative, a program of implementing research based best practices into our Justice system.

Colorado's Sheriffs are keepers of our state's jails. The beds in these jails are the most expensive, and often most crowded place to house incarcerated individuals. As such, Sheriffs are very aware of the need to make sure that our jail beds are used for the most dangerous individuals in our society. This bill provides the understanding and use of validated risk assessment tools for identifying who those individuals are. Conversely, it also gives us insight into lower risk individuals who could be better managed outside a jail setting in alternative programs and in pre-trial release programs.

Understanding someone's risk to reoffend and/or abscond from the justice system is a necessary and needed step for our state's criminal justice decision makers to tackle the problem of recidivism. The only way we can contemplate reducing future crime is by understanding risk, through the use of research based, validated risk instruments. Reducing future crime equates to less victims of crime and much more efficient use of our precious resources on those that we have the best opportunity to keep from recycling through our court systems.

Many jurisdictions hold on to current practices of making decisions on pre-trial incarceration based solely on the crime committed. This cookie cutter approach is counter intuitive to understanding that people are different. Some people have extensive criminal histories that include violent behavior while others have for the first time in their life been arrested for life changing mistakes. In

many locations in our state, these two people are judged equally in regard to pre-trial incarceration simply because they committed the same offense. The practice of using risk assessment instruments gives decision makers within our system the ability to make a decision, based on research and evidence of what works, to determine that the most risky people remain in jail or under close supervision and also to determine who could be successfully managed less intrusively in our communities.

Pre-trial risk assessment is foundational as a best practice in local criminal justice systems. Understanding risk, then subsequently the criminogenic needs of our state's offenders, and knowing when, how, and where to manage them is the work that we must all be contemplating. The importance and value of the use of evidence based practices and the use of risk assessment in pre-trial decisions, and placing an emphasis on statewide consistency in doing so, is necessary to the public safety of our state.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stan Hilkey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Warmest Regards," text.

Stan Hilkey, Sheriff of Mesa County.