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Testimony
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Before the House Health, Insurance, and Environment Committee
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House Bill 16-1004
Concerning a Requirement to Include Measurable Goals that are
Subject to Deadlines in Colorado's Climate Action Plan

On behalf of the Rocky Mountain Climate Organization (RMCO), I am testifying in support of House Bill 16-1004. Climate action needs to take place at all levels of government, yet the state can play a leadership role in setting the climate policy framework that engages local and state governments, the private sector, and citizens in taking action to make meaningful reductions in Colorado's contribution to climate disruption.

RMCO is a mainstream coalition with partner organizations, including six local governments, Denver Water, and various businesses and nonprofit organizations. We work with them to keep the West a special place by reducing climate disruption and its effects here.

Doing Colorado's part to reduce emissions is critical to reducing our vulnerabilities to a disrupted climate. The most important of those vulnerabilities is a projected likely decrease in water supplies. Although there is a range of projections about the possible effects of an altered climate on amount and location of precipitation, taken together they point toward a significant risk for reduced river flows and likely increases in demand brought on by hotter temperatures. Among the many other risks of climate change here are increases in insect infestations in our forests, more wildfires, more heat waves, more extreme weather events, additional stresses on fish and wildlife, and greater exposure to health effects such as heat stroke and West Nile disease. What we do in Colorado, by itself, obviously cannot be enough to prevent those impacts. But we certainly can do our share. And with all that we have at stake, and all the resources our state has to bring to bear, we can do even more, and demonstrate to the nation and the world what can be done to protect our climate.

We at RMCO draw on a deep background in climate action planning. During 2006-07, RMCO convened a blue-ribbon Climate Action Panel (CAP) to recommend ways to reduce our state's contributions and vulnerabilities to climate change. Patterned after projects to develop climate action agendas in other states, including many in the West, the Climate Action Panel was the first in the nation to be convened by a non-profit organization. Ten Project Directors, including then-Mayor John Hickenlooper, appointed 34 leaders from the state's public, private, and non-profit sectors to serve as panel members, who were assisted in their work by policy work groups. Altogether, 116 Coloradans worked for a year to develop the panel's recommendations, supported by a team of substantive experts in technical and cost-effectiveness analyses. The

panel recommended 70 actions to be taken in Colorado, consisting of 55 recommendations to reduce heat-trapping greenhouse gases and 15 recommendations to prepare the state for the changes that may be coming. The measures analyzed in terms of their cost-effectiveness were estimated to yield a total net savings of about \$2.6 billion for Coloradans by 2020, primarily in reduced energy costs.

The centerpiece of the RMCO panel recommendations is a state goal of reducing Colorado's emissions of heat-trapping gases 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050, compared to 2005 levels. Two weeks after our panel submitted its report, this same goal became part of the state's official Colorado Climate Action Plan announced by Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. This was in November 2007.

RMCO's familiarity with climate action planning also comes from working closely with local governments on climate action policy. We administer the Colorado Climate Network on behalf of many of the local governments in Colorado most engaged in climate action. In 2014, the Colorado Climate Network and the Colorado Municipal League jointly convened a Colorado Local Resilience Project, in which 78 representatives of 30 local governments and six associated organizations worked for several months to reach consensus on six conclusions and 36 recommendations on what local governments can do, on their own and acting with others, to prepare for and address climate change-related impacts, and what local governments need from the state and federal governments and other sources to do so. This effort led to the report of the Colorado Local Resilience Project in April 2015.

Through all of our work for the Colorado Climate Network, we know that many local governments are playing a leadership role in climate action in Colorado, including setting specific targets for reductions in emissions of heat-trapping pollutants, and then adopting strategies with well-defined goals to achieve those reductions. Many of those local governments tell us that without active leadership by the state on climate action, it will be very difficult to reach their local goals.

Over the past year, the Hickenlooper administration has begun to take significant steps to address climate change through reports and studies and particularly through the state's new Colorado Climate Plan, adopted last September. This plan does a good job of describing a broad overview of possible approaches to reduce emissions and prepare for changes that are forecast. We applaud the Governor and his administration for undertaking this plan, for the Governor's personal role in announcing the plan and emphasizing it in his State of the State address, and for the state government's commitment to having each relevant department or agency hold a stakeholder meeting to provide input for the various sectors addressed in the 2015 plan. This leadership opens the door to a new day of action by the Colorado state government in addressing the important challenges of climate change.

We also applaud the sponsors of House Bill 16-1004 for proposing this important legislation to strengthen in important ways the current state law on climate change planning – the law which drove the Hickenlooper administration to develop the new Colorado Climate Plan.

Despite a clear requirement in state law that an updated state climate action plan is to address the state's goals for reducing heat-trapping emissions, which are those set by Governor Ritter in 2007, the new Colorado Climate Plan does not do so. These goals are important in framing everything that the state government does to reduce these emissions. House Bill 16-1004 would make it unequivocally clear that state emission reduction goals must be addressed in the state's climate change planning efforts.

Another shortcoming of the latest climate change planning effort that could be addressed by an amendment has to do with stakeholder and public engagement in the state's planning efforts. A draft of the new state climate plan was circulated to only a very few organizations in the state (including RMCO), and was provided only with ground rules that the draft not be shared with others. We know that many local governments explicitly requested an opportunity to review and comment on the draft, but were not given that opportunity. The Hickenlooper administration is now committed to having a state government department or agency hold a stakeholder engagement session to solicit input on each sector addressed in the new climate plan. This is a welcome step, but even now, several months after the release of the plan, there are not yet schedules for all such stakeholder engagement sessions.

Finally, two other points.

The new Colorado Climate Plan, while certainly welcome, is a very general plan. It ought to be just the beginning of a process to set in place a clear, detailed plan of action by all relevant state government departments and agencies. We do not yet know what will be done to turn this very broad framework into specific actions.

Secondly, when the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment updated the state's inventory of heat-trapping emissions in 2014, it chose to use an Environmental Protection Agency platform (as many other states have done) which relies on broad-scale data collected at the federal level. Some specific Colorado data was plugged in, but much more could have been done to tailor it Colorado's unique circumstances. Since that was not done, there is not a capability to compare the 2014 results to the 2007 inventory that did employ more Colorado-specific data. Thus it is not useful for marking progress in meeting the state's emission reduction goals through such state policies as the increased renewable energy standard, the Clean Air/Clean Jobs act, utility energy efficiency programs, improved vehicle emissions standards, and more. Future inventories should be structured to enable evaluation of progress toward meeting goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony. We support HB 16-1004 because its passage would help establish specific expectations on the substance of climate action planning that state government should pursue. Colorado has much at stake and the need for action is clear.