



## Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police

### **An Urgent Appeal to Governor Polis and Colorado Legislative Leadership: The Time for Action on Public Safety is Now**

April 4, 2025

Governor Jared Polis  
Speaker Julie McCluskie  
President James Coleman  
House Minority Leader Pugliese  
Senate Minority Leader Paul Lundeen

Dear Governor Polis, Speaker McCluskie, President Coleman, House Minority Leader Pugliese, and Senate Minority Leader Lundeen,

"The blood of my officers' lays at the steps of our Capitol and the reckless and soft-on-crime legislation." These were the anguished words of Pueblo Police Chief Chris Noeller following the recent ambush that left three of his officers critically wounded, two with gunshots to the head. This tragedy represents the culmination of years of policy decisions that have steadily eroded public safety in Colorado.

The Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police stands as your committed partners in public safety. Every day, our officers put their lives on the line to protect the citizens of Colorado—a mission we share with you as state leaders. While we appreciate, and stand with, Governor Polis's commitment to making Colorado one of the top ten safest states and the legislature's desire to create a more just system, we need a strengthened collaborative approach that recognizes the frontline reality our officers face. This crisis requires all of us—law enforcement, executive leadership, and legislative bodies—working in concert to restore the balance between rehabilitation and accountability that has been lost through a pattern of increasing leniency toward criminal behavior.

The data confirms what Colorado residents experience daily: despite recent modest improvements, Colorado still ranks eighth nationally in violent crime and fourth in property crime rates. Motor vehicle theft, though declining from its peak, remains at crisis levels with Colorado ranking fourth in the nation. Small businesses across the state report closing or considering relocation due to repeated thefts and property damage that current laws fail to adequately address.

Your constituents have clearly expressed their priorities—voting overwhelmingly to support Proposition 130 (\$350 million for law enforcement) and Proposition 128 (truth in sentencing). They expect legislative action that aligns with these values.

## **The Human Cost of Our Current Policy Direction**

The consequences of certain legislative decisions are not theoretical—they are tragically real measured in lives lost, communities traumatized, and public spaces rendered unsafe. A few recent examples:

In March 2025, a Pueblo police officer was ambushed while sitting in his patrol car by an individual who was out on bond for three felonies despite 14 prior felony arrests. The officer was shot in the head and left gravely injured. Two additional officers responding to the scene were also critically injured — one likewise suffering a devastating head wound — as the suspect unleashed a barrage of nearly 80 rounds from an AR-15. All three officers now face long roads to recovery. This represents a catastrophic failure of our pretrial system to protect both officers and the public from individuals with demonstrated patterns of dangerous behavior.

In September 2022, Arvada Police Officer Dillon Vakoff was murdered while responding to a domestic disturbance. His killer was a repeat offender with a history of weapons charges and violent crimes who should never have been free to take Officer Vakoff's life. This tragedy might have been prevented with stronger accountability measures for individuals with patterns of escalating criminal behavior.

In October 2023, a suspect violently attacked a special-needs individual in a grocery store and was released on a \$5,000 bond. Recently, the same individual was arrested again for bias-motivated harassment and threats at the Boulder Library. Despite the victim's brother testifying before the House Judiciary Committee about this exact scenario, legislation that would have required minimum bonds for repeat violent offenders failed to advance.

In January 2025, Arvada officers were fired upon during a felony stop by an offender who had been sentenced to 18 years in prison in 2018 but was back on the streets after serving just over six years.

That same month, a career criminal with 67 prior arrests nearly struck Lakewood agents with a vehicle while fleeing. When apprehended, he was armed once again, demonstrating the system's failure to effectively address habitual offenders.

These are only a few examples among many where soft-on-crime legislation has adversely impacted public safety across our state. Our officers could provide countless more instances where policies prioritizing leniency over accountability have endangered both law enforcement and the communities we serve.

## **Legislative Actions Impacting Community Safety**

Over the past several years, a pattern of legislation has systematically weakened accountability in our criminal justice system:

### **Bail and Bond Reform**

The pattern of failed bail policies is clear and dangerous. Recent reforms ([HB19-1225](#), [HB21-1280](#)) have prioritized immediate release over public safety, allowing dangerous individuals—like the Pueblo shooter with 14 prior felony arrests—to cycle through a revolving door of arrest and release, evading accountability and endangering our communities.

## **Weakened Sentencing**

Legislation ([SB21-271](#), [HB23-1293](#)) has reclassified and downgraded penalties for weapons, drug, and theft crimes and weakened sentencing guidelines, and repealed mandatory minimums for numerous serious offenses and stripping judges of their ability to impose appropriate sentences. When offenders serve just one-third of their sentences before returning to terrorize communities—as with the Arvada officer shooting in January 2025—we witness the direct consequences of leniency replacing accountability.

## **Ineffective Drug Policies**

The fentanyl crisis continues to devastate Colorado families while legislation that would hold distributors accountable fails to advance. [HB19-1263](#) began the devastation, reducing fentanyl possession penalties just when stronger deterrents were needed. [HB22-1326](#) attempted to reverse course but left critical loopholes that hamper prosecution and leave families without protection. Meanwhile, bills that would have closed these gaps to save lives ([SB25-044](#), [HB24-1306](#)) failed to advance.

## **Rejected Public Safety and Accountability Measures**

Common-sense measures to hold repeat violent offenders accountable through minimum bond requirements ([HB24-1284](#), [HB25-1072](#)) and to address firearm theft ([HB24-1162](#)) were rejected despite clear evidence of their necessity. These decisions prioritized leniency for offenders over safety for law-abiding citizens.

## **2025 Current Legislation Further Weakening Public Safety**

- [HB25-1206](#) (Extreme Indifference) would dangerously reduce penalties for attempted murder, sending the message that showing utter disregard for human life warrants lesser consequences merely because death didn't occur—a matter of luck rather than intent.
- [HB25-1214](#) (Prison Beds) undermines judicial authority by creating a presumption of parole eligibility even for inmates with disciplinary violations, potentially returning dangerous offenders to communities prematurely and disregarding victims' concerns in the process.
- [HB25-1147](#) (Municipal Court) imposes a one-size-fits-all approach that strips local governments of their ability to address community-specific public safety challenges through their municipal courts.

## **2025 Measures We Support that Strengthens Public Safety**

- [HB25-1276](#) (Failure to Appear) addresses the crisis of accountability in our courts by allowing judges to impose monetary bonds for defendants with patterns of deliberately avoiding court proceedings, while protecting first-time offenders.
- [HB25-1171](#) (POWPO for Auto Theft) recognizes the dangerous connection between motor vehicle theft and illegal firearm possession by preventing those convicted of auto theft from legally possessing firearms—a critical update given Colorado's 237% increase in vehicle thefts.

- [HB25-1062](#) (Firearm Theft) properly classifies the theft of firearms as a felony regardless of monetary value, acknowledging that stolen firearms pose a unique public safety threat far beyond their dollar value when used in subsequent violent crimes.

## **A Path Forward Through Partnership**

As Chiefs of Police, we serve the same Colorado citizens you do. Our officers are in our communities every day—responding to calls, protecting the vulnerable, and witnessing firsthand the consequences of policy decisions. We don't just enforce the law; we live with its real-world impacts alongside the communities we serve.

We believe Colorado can achieve better public safety outcomes through collaborative approaches. As your partners in protecting Colorado citizens, we invite you to join us in creating safer communities by:

1. **Governor Polis:** We ask you to stand with Colorado's law enforcement officers by publicly opposing and committing to veto legislation that lands on your desk and undermines our shared public safety goals. Your voice can serve as a powerful counterbalance to the tide of leniency that has dominated recent criminal justice policy.
2. **Legislative Leadership:** We urge you to support the men and women of law enforcement by fast-tracking legislation that enhances accountability for repeat violent offenders and provides greater protection for Colorado communities. Additionally, we ask you to halt the advancement of any bills that would further weaken public safety until they receive proper vetting through a comprehensive stakeholder process.
3. **Collectively:** We ask you to join us in our daily mission by committing to balance rehabilitation opportunities with appropriate consequences that reflect the serious impact of crime on victims and communities.
4. **Meet With Us:** We invite you to walk alongside us. We invite you to continue to meet directly with law enforcement leaders and officers to hear firsthand about the challenges faced on the front lines of public safety.

Colorado voters have demonstrated their concern about public safety through measures like Proposition 130 and Proposition 128. These ballot initiatives reflect public sentiment that should inform our collective approach to public safety legislation.

The tragedies we've described represent more than statistics—they are our neighbors and community members whose sense of security has been compromised. As Colorado's leaders, you have the opportunity to change our trajectory. As Colorado's Chiefs of Police, we remain steadfastly committed to doing our part to protect the citizens of Colorado. We need your partnership to provide us with the tools and policies that enable rather than hinder this vital mission.

We share your commitment to a Colorado where all residents can feel safe. As your partners in public safety, we stand ready to work together toward this goal. The time for collaborative action is now.

Respectfully and in partnership,

The Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police