



Support for SB21-071

Thank you Chairman Lee and Honorable Members of the Judiciary.

I am Christiano Sosa, Executive Director, The Arc of Colorado advocating for the rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

When juveniles with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) become involved in the criminal justice system as incarcerated individuals, they face fear, prejudice, and lack of understanding. Attorneys, judges, law enforcement personnel, first responders, forensic evaluators, victim advocates, court personnel, and correctional personnel may lack accurate and appropriate knowledge to apply standards of due process in a manner that provides justice for individuals with I/DD.

These individuals are:

- **Suffering from a lack of a safety net:** Often, individuals with I/DD get involved in the criminal justice system due to a lack of community supports. Police or first responders are called in *temporary* crisis situations where they may be a harm to themselves or others, and individuals are held in the criminal justice system because there is nowhere else to go;
- **Unrecognized as having a disability.** Individuals with I/DD are frequently undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, especially by evaluators, including law enforcement personnel, who are not trained in assessment of individuals with intellectual disability and who do not recognize common characteristics such as individuals' attempts to hide their disability;
- **Discriminated against in sentencing, confinement, and release.** Individuals with I/DD are subject to abuse and exploitation when incarcerated and denied either alternatives to incarceration or appropriate habilitation programs that would address their intellectual disability, and/or behavior, and help them return safely to the community. When incarcerated, individuals with I/DD often serve extended time because they do not understand or cannot meet steps to reduce time and secure an earlier release.

We believe that when reasonable and appropriate supports, accommodations, treatment, and education, as well as alternatives to juvenile detention are offered, especially in crisis situations, the long-term consequences of juveniles who then become adults in the system is drastically reduced. **We strongly support SB21-071.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Christiano Sosa'.

Christiano Sosa
Executive Director