

## **Opposing SB148\_L.001**

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**Mr. Chairman/Chairman, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.**

I strongly oppose SB148\_L.001, a well-intentioned but deeply flawed amendment that targets Colorado's professional lobbyists in unfair and constitutionally questionable ways.

Let me be clear: I believe in transparency, ethical standards, and responsible lobbying. But this amendment crosses the line. It imposes sweeping restrictions on the political rights of one group of citizens simply because of their job title—professional lobbyists.

Under current Colorado law, professional lobbyists are already prohibited from making or soliciting contributions during the legislative session. That's a reasonable safeguard. But this amendment goes far beyond that. It would make it illegal for a lobbyist—or even someone who stopped lobbying six months ago—to contribute to or help raise money for a candidate, a legislator, or even a political committee associated with them. That is an extraordinary restriction on political participation.

Let's call it what it is: this is discrimination based on profession. If I were a CEO, a union leader, or an environmental activist, I could still contribute freely to candidates and committees. But because I happen to lobby for a living, I would lose that right—not because of something unethical I've done, but because of who I am. That's wrong.

Even worse, this amendment attempts to regulate what professional lobbyists do **outside** the legislative session—when they are, like everyone else, private citizens participating in our democracy. This violates the spirit, and possibly the letter, of the First Amendment. Contributions are a form of political expression. Curtailing that right because someone engages in advocacy work professionally is a serious overreach.

And let's not forget the practical problems. The bill requires lobbyists and political parties to calculate and disclose the "value" of meals at fundraisers—something both ambiguous and burdensome. It invites legal confusion, accidental violations, and needless red tape.

Perhaps most troubling, this measure reinforces a narrative that lobbyists are inherently suspect and must be restricted beyond reason. That's not only unfair, it's dangerous. Lobbyists are a vital part of the democratic process. We help clients understand the law, give voice to underrepresented interests, and ensure lawmakers are fully informed. Penalizing us for being engaged and active in the political process only weakens that process.

SB148\_L.001 is a solution in search of a problem. There has been no demonstrated abuse to justify these expanded prohibitions. What it will do is make it harder for professionals to serve, harder for citizens to access the process, and harder for the public to get the full picture on policy debates.

I urge this committee to reject this amendment and preserve the rights of all Coloradans—regardless of profession—to participate fully in our democracy.

**Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.**