



Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

4/5/19

I am with The Arc of Colorado. The Arc of Colorado promotes and protects the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively promotes their full inclusion in the community throughout their lifetimes. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 222.

Senate Bill 222 is a costly bill, however, not addressing prevention with regards to competency is far costlier. The population that we advocate for in particular, would be incredibly impacted by the passage of this bill.

When an individual with an intellectual or developmental disability commits a crime, they begin a process that often spans the course of months, if not years. This is not only a stressful and arduous process for the defendant and their families, but it is also economically inefficient for our justice system. In other words, this process is serving the interests of no one.

Adequate prevention and support in the community breaks this cycle before it begins. The promise of Senate Bill 222 is a system that more adequately serves the needs of individuals who would be at risk of competency assessments. For the 30-35% of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and a co-occurring mental or behavior health diagnosis, this bill would provide vital opportunities not only to avoid the traumatic experience of incarceration, but also, provides a key opportunity to save on state resources. In 2014, 5 out of every 6 state prisoners were arrested in the 9 years after their release, according to the Department of Justice. When we think about this statistic in the context of individuals with disabilities who are incarcerated (19.5% of prisoners and 30.9% of jail inmates), we can begin to understand the cost of arrest for society, and for the individuals that we advocate for. Providing adequate mental health supports in the community can potentially save the state on criminal justice expenditures and addresses the root cause of the problem.

The societal benefits of this bill far outweigh the costs. We not only urge you to support this bill now, but we also urge you to support this bill as it moves forward. We feel that it is a priority in this tight budget year. It is sensible policy both for the state, and in turn, society at large. Colorado should be leading this country in mental health treatment and prevention of institutionalization.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 222. Please reach out with any questions you may have.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abigail Negley".

Abigail Negley

Public Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, The Arc of Colorado



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