



Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

4-8-19

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 223.

This bill is one of our most highly prioritized bills this session. It provides a remedy to a long-standing issue for the state of Colorado; one that we are all eager to resolve in the right way. We believe that this bill addresses the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and individuals with co-occurring I/DD and behavioral health disorders and would help to decrease the number of persons languishing in prisons or jails as they await competency hearings and restoration. The enormous amount of stakeholder work that has gone into both of these bills is a testament to the commitment of all parties involved to develop sound public policy.

The Arc of Colorado would like to emphasize a few of the particular strengths of this bill. The first is that the bill mandates that when deemed appropriate, community-based restoration and return to the community shall be utilized. Community based practices provide the optimal level of support for the individuals we serve, while also mitigating the dangers of a jail-based setting for a population that is already disproportionately victimized. In all cases, restoration is coupled with treatment and case-management. It is our experience that this added support is vital to successful community living after arrest.

Amongst our 14 local chapters, we find that more often than not, the competency process spans the course of months, if not years in most cases. Clarifying timelines and allowing for community-based alternatives not only helps to expedite this process but does so in a way that is thoughtful and provides the impetus for supports that help the population we advocate for not to re-offend. A more expedient process is valuable not only to the offender, but to their family, and to the state of Colorado.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 223. Please reach out to me with any questions you might 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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