



Dear Committee Members,

My name is Abigail Negley and I am writing to you today on behalf of The Arc of Colorado. The Arc of Colorado protects and promotes the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion in the community throughout their lifetimes. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide this written testimony on Senate Bill 180.

Although my testimony is normally more data driven, I wanted to take the opportunity to tell you a story about community living today. My friend (I will call her by a different name for confidentiality) Veronica is a self-advocate. In the world of intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), a self-advocate is a person with a disability who does work in their community to advocate for their own rights and the rights of others with I/DD.

Earlier this month, I was with Veronica at a national conference for self-advocates. Over lunch, a group of about seven self-advocates were discussing their living situations. Veronica was very quiet, until Bruce asked, "what about you Veronica? Do you live in your own place?"

Veronica spent her childhood in an institution. Although she has held steady employment since the age of 18 (she is now in her 60s), she has lived in various settings including group homes and with family. When asked about where she lives now though, she beams, "I do live in my own place!" she says, "I can see the mountains from my bedroom and I can walk to get coffee whenever I want!" Each time I hear her discuss her apartment, it is with this same joy.

Veronica not only loves her apartment, she is also incredibly proud of it. After many years of living in an institution, simply the ability to wake up when she wishes is something she had to fight for. However, even now, she faces many challenges. Her parents passed away many years ago and did not have a firm grasp on financial planning. As such, Veronica lives paycheck to paycheck and struggles to afford the things she needs. An eviction would be devastating. It might mean a return to a group home, a nursing home, or homelessness. Legal defense would be her only hope.

Beyond this one story, the eviction legal defense fund is sensible economic policy. If the cost savings are even somewhat close to the cost savings seen in Philadelphia, this bill would more than pay for itself. For many of the individuals we serve, competent legal defense is the best chance they have of either staying in their homes or having the time to find other living arrangements. The eviction process is difficult for any person and for someone with limited capacity, it is even more devastating.

I urge you to vote yes on this bill. If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abigail Negley".

Abigail Negley

Public Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, The Arc of Colorado

[abigail@thearcofco.org](mailto:abigail@thearcofco.org)