



Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Heidi Haines and I am with The Arc of Colorado. The Arc of Colorado promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1045.

We strongly believe that this bill would be of great service for Coloradans who find themselves in need of guardianship and have no friends or family members to support them. At two of our 14 local chapters, we provide guardianship services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, specifically. Of course, guardianship is not our first course of action. It is reserved for individuals who need the most intensive supports and, for an Arc Chapter to provide guardianship, they must have no other possible friend or family member willing to provide guardianship. Though this may seem a relatively small population, each year, the need exceeds our capacity. This is to say nothing of the calls our chapters receive pertaining to guardianship services needed for individuals without intellectual or developmental disabilities.

The Office of Public Guardianship would provide a vital service to some of the most vulnerable members of our society. In seeing to the needs individuals with diminished capacity who have no one to turn to, this office would continue a great Colorado legacy of providing support to those who need it most. This certainly includes the community that The Arcs in Colorado advocate for.

Further, we believe that by utilizing the services of a state agency, the likelihood of abuse would be mitigated. Some of the individuals we ultimately provide guardianship for do have family members who have provided guardianship until they were reported for abuse. In some cases, this abuse went on for years before someone in the community or a provider noticed symptoms. An impartial state employee with access to proper training provides in our opinion, at least some safeguard.

In this tight budget year, we urge you to prioritize this bill. The benefit of these services to those that need it would be incredible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Heidi Haines' in a cursive script.

Heidi Haines, Director of Advocacy