

Position Statement Opposing HB25-1146:
Juvenile Detention Bed Cap

February 20, 2025

Disability Law Colorado (DLC) is a non-profit organization established to protect and promote the rights of individuals with disabilities. We serve as the federally mandated and state-designated Protection and Advocacy System (P&A) for people with disabilities as authorized by the federal protection and advocacy statutes.

As the P&A, DLC has the unique authority to go into facilities where people with disabilities receive services to monitor the conditions and speak with individuals residing there. In the last several years, we have monitored each facility run by the Division of Youth Services (DYS), visiting most of them several times.

Through these monitoring visits, we have spoken directly with many children who are or have been placed in custody within one of these facilities. Many of these children have been victims themselves and they sincerely want the necessary supports to enable them to get an appropriate education, learn life skills, and pursue gainful employment once they have served their time. Focusing on appropriate community-based services instead of a correctional placement will provide a better opportunity for them to decrease future justice-involvement and increase future contributions to society.

Furthermore, many of these children have disabilities – some diagnosed and some not – and sometimes a person’s disabilities may have a direct relationship to the behavior that leads to an incident that results in charges. Particularly for children with brains that are still developing, it can be extremely frustrating to get in trouble for behavior over which they may not have full control because of their disability all while still figuring out how that disability impacts them.

We have received many calls over the years from DHS facilities regarding the overuse of physical management. These calls are not decreasing. Additionally, while asking youth about the recent overdose issues in DHS, kids have told us that “this is prison so there will always be drugs.” We are concerned that at its current cap, DHS facilities are not adequately meeting the needs of Colorado’s youth, especially those with disabilities. Increasing the juvenile detention bed cap only increases the number of children placed in these facilities and deprives them of the supports needed at such a critical age.

Furthermore, it has long been true that DHS is [providing services for many children who are detained past the date they are deemed releasable due to a lack of available community supports](#). The focus should be on providing community-based support for those deemed releasable, therefore freeing up existing beds for those who must be in the custody of DHS.

For these reasons, we oppose HB25-1164.

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House Health & Human Services

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HB25-1146 Juvenile Detention Bed Cap

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Jay Buzruk Against themselves</p>	<p>Good afternoon, members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Jaay Buzrruk, and I am a social work graduate student at Colorado State University. I also work as a case manager at a youth center, supporting youth in expulsion, diversion, and probation. Today I am here to advocate for the youth I work with and urge you to oppose bill HB25-1146.</p> <p>This bill is crucial because it addresses the vulnerabilities of youth in detention centers who face mental health challenges, housing instability, and financial struggles. National Survey of Children’s Health reports that “nearly two-thirds of more than 5.3 million adolescents ages 12 to 17 with a diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition had difficulty accessing treatment in 2023”. Focusing on community-based resources such as rehabilitation, mentoring and support, mental health services, education, and job training provides youth with the support that helps them address any wrongdoing, heal, and grow. Investing in programs that support youth not only helps reduce recidivism but ensures better transparency of practices within the justice system, not just more beds.</p> <p>In my work, I support youth who’ve faced trauma and instability. Many of them struggle with their emotional, physical, and financial needs. I have seen the power of resources such as educational classes, second-chance diversion conditions, and extra support. When these opportunities are taken away and individuals are placed in institutional facilities it impacts their social and mental well-being, and confidence to make better choices, and strips youth of their family and support.</p> <p>While I haven’t experienced being in a detention center, I know someone who has faced similar struggles. Having involvement in this system was life-changing for them, affecting their mental health, difficulty reintegrating with society, and having no support after being forced to figure their life out by themselves.</p>

	<p>Early intervention can break the cycle of instability. I urge you to oppose HB25-1146 and ensure that youth find the resources they need to thrive rather than beds. Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>
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