



LCS Committees <committees.lcs.ga@coleg.gov>

Testimony for 1045

Carson Covey <carson@familyvoicesco.org>

Tue, Jan 27, 2026 at 10:54 AM

To: committees.lcs.ga@coleg.gov, Michele Williers <mwilliers@peakparent.org>

Here is my coworker's testimony. I couldn't submit it online.

My name is Michele Williers, and I serve as the CEO of PEAK Parent Center in Colorado. PEAK provides training, information, and advisement to families of children and young adults with disabilities and to the professionals who support them. I am also the mother of a young adult with significant disabilities, and I'm writing in strong support of HB26-1045. Safe, stable housing is not a "nice to have" for people with disabilities, it is the foundation that makes everything else possible: education, employment, health, and community life. When housing is unstable, inaccessible, or conditional on a landlord's misunderstanding of disability, families and individuals pay the price in ways that are immediate and long-lasting.

Our family knows this personally. My son was born extremely premature, spent months in the NICU, and later was diagnosed with deafblindness and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Like many families, we have spent years navigating complex systems to ensure he can live with dignity, safety, and the supports he needs to thrive. Today, he is a young adult working toward greater independence and meaningful community connection, goals that depend on housing being stable and on reasonable accommodations being clearly understood and consistently applied.

In my role at PEAK, I also hear from families across Colorado who face barriers when they request disability-related accommodations in housing. Too often, they encounter unclear standards, inconsistent responses, or outright refusal creating delays and instability that can be devastating for children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

HB26-1045 matters because it strengthens disability housing protections and promotes clear, workable reasonable-accommodation standards that both tenants and housing providers can understand and follow. When expectations are clear, disputes decrease, stability increases, and people with disabilities are better able to remain safely housed and participate in their communities.

On behalf of PEAK Parent Center and the families we serve, I respectfully urge you to vote YES on HB26-1045. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to ensuring Coloradans with disabilities have fair access to safe, stable housing.

Respectfully submitted,
Michele Williers
CEO, PEAK Parent Center

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Public Policy Advocacy and Education Affecting Persons With Disabilities
Americans With Disabilities Act, Disability Rights Compliance and Customer Service Training

January 27, 2026

RE; HB 26-1045 SUPPORT

Madam Chair, Members,

Thank you for your time today.

My name is Mark Simon and I represent Mark Simon.

I am here today to state support for HB 26-1045, a clarification of CADA which is needed and will assist People with Disabilities and landlords in better understanding their legal rights and responsibilities. This is a “win” for everyone, those who need an emotional support animal, landlords, taxpayers and the public.

For those of you who do not know me, I was lead public policy advocate on the Hill for more than 30 years, for which I should get a commendation or a commitment and I am not really sure which. I retired several years ago, with the exception of the CDFC (the committee I created selling license plates, including the black ones) in which I still participate.

I have also done extensive training and consulting on ADA, CADA and service animal law, including for Bar Associations, judiciary, prosecutorial entities and law enforcement, as well as served as an expert in litigation, and mediations for the DOJ and EEOC. To be clear, I provide technical assistance, I am not licensed to practice law in any jurisdiction.

Among other works, I was involved with passage of CO’s 1st service animal protection statutes in 1991 and subsequent updates, and authored the 2014 recodification of Part 8, the disability provisions of CADA. While the definitions of “Assistance animal”, “Service animal” and “Emotional Support Animals” have not changed, the understanding and perception has.

An Assistance animal is an animal that provides assistance to a person with a disability and includes;

A service animal only includes dogs and miniature horses, that has been trained to perform specific tasks for a qualified individual with a disability, such as pulling a wheelchair, assisting with balance and mobility, alerting someone to take their medications, alerting someone to a diagnosed disabling behavioral health condition, such as an anxiety attack so they can relocate, or getting my beer ☺. I am a wheelchair user myself.

An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal who provides comfort and support for an individual who a medical provider has determined the individual can benefit from, but has not had specialized training. ESA’s are only protected under the law in housing, but not in places of public accommodation, transportation, etc. Their access outside of housing is at the discretion of the business or entity but not legally required, which many people do not understand.

ESAs have gotten a bad rap due to abuse; people using the term to “game” the system. Like the news stories about the ESA peacock, lama, pigs and snakes brought on to airplanes, which why protections for ESAs has been removed from air travel. As a result we are seeing an increase in the number of people who are improperly questioned or denied housing of their choice due to their need for an ESA, or given a choice of appropriate housing or doing without a necessary support.

Besides ESAs supporting and benefiting their owners, they benefit society by reducing need for paid supports, stabilizing and reducing exacerbation of behavioral health conditions, before they become a significant impairment.

I am a firm believer in clarity, better education and communication, and hopefully this change to statute will improve those.

I know the concern of abuse of this protection has been raised. If that is a concern, we have already addressed those issues in HB16-1426. I would also encourage CCRD to more fully implement the education and resources provisions at CRS 24-34-309, and be much more proactive, than reactive when a complaint is filed.

Thank you for your time, am happy to answer any questions you may have or to be available for consult.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. S.', written in a cursive style.