

Remarks of Sam Walker in favor of House Bill 23-1280

Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee

My name is Sam Walker. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about House Bill 23-1280, which I support because it will help to expand access, quality, and fairness in the justice system for all Coloradans.

I'm a member of the Access to Justice Commission and a volunteer executive in residence for Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser. That follows my retirement from a leadership career in business and in the public sector.

The views I express today are my own, not necessarily those of the AG's Office, although that Office supports the bill.

On the public sector side, I led the Employment Standards Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor as an appointee of President Bush (41), was a clearance counsel for President Bush 43, and was Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment for then-Gov. Hickenlooper for the last year of his term.

On the business side, I was one of an executive team of 8 or so for nearly 20 years at Coors Brewing Company, building a global company. I also led the justice reform institute IAALS at the University of Denver for nearly a year a couple of years back.

I also practiced law as a partner and trial lawyer at the Washington, D.C. firm of Wiley Rein for 10 years in the 1990s and early 2000s.

We on the Commission are excited about the possibility of being explicitly accountable to the General Assembly and so the people of Colorado. House Bill 23-1280 creates an annual report by us to the General Assembly on legislative and regulatory recommendations as part of the SMART Act process.

I'm excited about the bill's accountability because of what I learned in business. First, big systems benefit dramatically from scale thinking and innovation. Second, what gets measured gets done.

I also learned from leading IAALS that access to justice, when imagined as broadly as possible and pursued at scale based on data, can make a big difference in the way people experience justice.

The state courts of Colorado are where many Coloradans will experience their government in the most powerful and personal way in their lives. What happens there is profound. And the courts are also a big statewide system – with over 80,000 new civil cases filed in 2022.

The diversity of voices, experiences, and perspectives of the ATJC can imagine scale opportunities, innovations, and improvements in our civil justice system that will be valuable to the General Assembly.

I support this bill and urge its passage.