

Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
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January 22, 2009

RE: Please support HB 09-1048

Dear Representative Reisberg and members of the Committee,

As you are well aware, persons with disabilities often are excluded from the mainstream of society and denied their human rights. Discrimination against them takes various forms, ranging from the denial of opportunities to segregation and isolation, because of the imposition of physical and social barriers. Effects of disability-based discrimination have been particularly severe in such fields as education, employment, housing, transport, cultural life and access to public places and services. This may result from distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference, and denial of reasonable accommodation on the basis of disablement, which effectively nullifies or impairs the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Despite some progress over the past decades, the human rights of persons with disabilities have not been adequately addressed in society. Most disability legislation and policies are based on the assumption that persons with disabilities simply are not able to exercise the same rights as non-disabled persons. Consequently, the situation of persons with disabilities is often addressed in terms of rehabilitation and social services. This legislation is needed to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are considered in all aspects on an equal basis with persons without disabilities. This law would be a first step in addressing existing discrimination and promoting opportunities for the disabled to participate on an equal basis in social life and development.

There also are certain cultural and social barriers that have served to deter full participation of persons with disabilities. Discriminatory practices against them may be the result of social and cultural norms that have been institutionalized by law. Changes in the perception and concepts of disability will involve both changes in values and increased understanding at all levels of society, as well as a focus on those social and cultural norms that can perpetuate erroneous and inappropriate myths about disability. Allowing people with disabilities to be active participants on boards and commissions that affect their daily lives will help to begin this process.

In closing, the Council asks that you support House Bill 09-1048 and allow persons with disabilities their rightful place at the table.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Marica Tewell