



January 14, 2019

The Honorable Jared Polis
Governor of Colorado
Colorado State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Polis,

On behalf of providers and advocates representing Coloradans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), we would like to congratulate you on your election to the office of Governor. Over the coming years of your term, we look forward to working with your office to ensure that Coloradans with IDD have opportunities to live, work, and participate in their communities and receive support to do so. Below, we outline our shared priorities that are imperative to achieving this goal. By the end of your term, we call upon you to:

Eliminate the Waiting List for IDD Services

People with IDD have unique skills, talents, and experiences to contribute to society. In order to make these contributions, they typically need publicly-funded support throughout their lifetimes. Despite legislation calling for a plan to end the waiting list by 2020, more than 3,000 Coloradans continue to wait for the services they need to access the equality of opportunity that people without disabilities enjoy, with no clear end in sight. The existence of a waiting list is a social justice issue that we all have a responsibility to address, and while the IDD community has long shared a unified vision to eliminate it, strong leadership from your office is a necessary component to success.

Create a Cabinet-Level Office for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities and the programs that support them need recognition from Colorado's highest office. The system of supports available to Coloradans with IDD is complex web of programs, services, and models that is challenging to navigate, especially with the array of systems change initiatives underway. Currently, programs supporting this population are administered and regulated by the Departments of Human Services (Early Intervention and state-operated Regional Centers), Education (Special Education), Health Care Policy & Financing (Medicaid waiver programs, state-funded Supported Living Services, and Family Support), Public Health and Environment (facility licensure and regulatory oversight), Local Affairs (Section 8 housing vouchers), and Labor and Employment (Vocational Rehabilitation). Additionally, most of these programs are regulated at the federal level. While the population of people with IDD is relatively small, services for this population represent more than \$600 million in the state budget. Given the number of state agencies and regulatory requirements involved, as well as the state budget investment, Colorado is in need of a streamlined and coordinated approach to IDD services across the lifespan. Like other states, Colorado should employ an Office for People with Disabilities with leadership at the cabinet level to improve access to and

quality of services, as well as ensure financial efficiency and smooth transitions between life stages. The Office should represent all disability types, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Finalize Person-Centered Systems Change Efforts

Colorado is currently in the process of redesigning its two waiver programs for adults with IDD into one waiver that would provide person-centered supports, but, due to the scale and complexity of this task, the process was recently restructured and the timeline extended. Coloradans with IDD, their families, advocates, and providers are eager for meaningful changes to help people navigate the service system and access the services that best meet their needs. Critical parts of this redesign process include:

- Giving people accepting waiver services an individualized budget allocation which can be used flexibly to purchase services that best meet their needs, creating transparency in how waiver resources are allocated and placing budget authority in the hands of the person with IDD.
- Creating a user-friendly, web-based provider selection tool specific to IDD to allow people to see the full range of provider agencies available to meet their needs and select the best match.
- Collecting and sharing data about whether people with IDD are accessing the services they need to identify gaps and inform future policymaking.
- Implementing waiver services that support social inclusion and full integration into all aspects of community life and are characterized by current best practice.

We are committed to working with you and your Lieutenant Governor, Dianne Primavera, to complete these goals. We note that Lt. Governor Primavera has a history of leadership on disability issues in her role in the General Assembly, which we hope will continue in her new role. Finally, we would like to share some relevant information about Coloradans with IDD:

- An estimated 1-2% of the population lives with IDD. This translates to between 56,800 and 113,600 Colorado citizens.
- Services for people with IDD are almost solely government-funded, with the vast majority provided through Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Waiver programs.
- More than 15,000 children and adults receive community IDD services in Colorado, including waiver programs, state programs, and Early Intervention. An additional 87,947 children receive special education services in schools.
- People with IDD incur their disabilities during the developmental period, or before the age of 22. Most people with IDD need supports of some kind throughout their entire lifespans.
- Historically, people with IDD were largely segregated in institutions, and today, they continue to experience significant barriers to integration, employment, health care, education, housing, and other aspects of community life compared to people without disabilities.

We must ensure that Coloradans with IDD and their families, advocates, and providers are well supported through state systems that streamline and ensure access to high-quality services. We look forward to collaborating with you to make meaningful community living a reality for all Coloradans with IDD.

Sincerely,



[Joshua Rael](#), JD, MPA, Executive Director

Alliance is a non-profit, statewide association of Community Centered Boards (CCBs) and Program Approved Service Agencies (PASAs) that is dedicated to strengthening services and supports for Coloradans with intellectual and developmental disabilities by collaboratively advancing innovative policies and practices. www.alliancecolorado.org



[Joelle Brouner](#), Director

The Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council is a 24-member body appointed by the Governor to advise the Governor and General Assembly on matters impacting persons with developmental disabilities. The Council advocates for the development and implementation of public policy to further the independence, self-determination, and community inclusion of Coloradans with developmental disabilities. www.coddcc.org



[Mary Anne Harvey](#), Executive Director

As Colorado's Protection & Advocacy System, Disability Law Colorado protects and promotes the rights of people with disabilities and older people in Colorado through direct legal representation, advocacy, education, and legislative analysis. www.disabilitylawco.org



[Sandra L. Friedman](#), MD, MPH, Executive Director

As Colorado's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program, JFK Partners provides interdisciplinary pre-serve training, continuing education, clinical services, community collaboration, research, and dissemination pertaining to Coloradans with developmental disabilities. www.ucdenver.edu/jfkpartners



[Christiano Sosa](#), Executive Director

The Arc of Colorado is a private, non-profit statewide volunteer organization. Along with its local chapters, The Arc provides crucial educational information, support, and advocacy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. www.thearcofco.org

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