



COLORADO

**Department of Health Care
Policy & Financing**

Department of Health Care Policy & Financing
1570 Grant Street
Denver, CO 80203

January 14, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: The Disability Integration Act

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, I am writing to you in support of the Disability Integration Act (DIA). This bipartisan, bicameral legislation will not only ensure the right of all individuals with disabilities to live in the community, but it will also help those of us who are working hard in our states to fulfil the promise of the United States Supreme Court Olmstead ruling. This legislation is vital to extending the freedoms guaranteed in our Constitution to all individuals with disabilities and older Americans.

Colorado has made great progress in community integration since the Olmstead ruling 20 years ago, but there is still further to go and DIA will help us get there. The bill's ten-year transition period offers states a realistic path forward to ensure that anyone who wants to live in the community can. The planning process will enable states to move from the defensive posture of reacting to Olmstead litigation to an affirmative stance of working towards a common goal. This shift will allow us to bring all parties to the table, so that rather than working independently of one another, Medicaid Directors can coordinate our community integration efforts with other essential agencies, including other officials from state Housing and Health Departments. This will allow States to create comprehensive transition plans that address every necessary component to ensure individuals with disabilities and older Americans can live in the community. States will see multiple benefits from this change; not only will people be

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able to age in place and live where they choose but there is considerable evidence that people live longer healthier and happier lives when they can stay in the community.

One of the hard truths about being an Executive Director of a Medicaid agency is that managing costs factor into so much of what we do. This bill is one of many examples where doing the right thing is also cost-effective. Home and community-based services cost far less to deliver than institutional placement. States will experience significant savings from this bill – a benefit not captured by a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) score.

I know Governor Polis is very proud to have been a cosponsor of this bill when he was in Congress. In fact, every member of our Congressional delegation – Democrat and Republican alike - was a cosponsor of DIA in the 115th Congress. That support reflects Colorado's long history with the Disability Rights movement and our state's ongoing commitment to serving individuals with disabilities through implementing Home and Community Based Services waivers and other initiatives

DIA is a vital part of the ongoing project to extend the promise of freedom to all Americans. I urge you to pass the Disability Integration Act into law.

Sincerely,



Kim Bimestefer
Executive Director
Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

