



COLORADO

Governor Jared Polis

April 8, 2019

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
United States House of Representatives
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: The Disability Integration Act

Dear Representative Hoyer:

As the Governor of the State of Colorado, I am writing to you in support of the Disability Integration Act (DIA). This bipartisan and bicameral legislation will not only ensure the right of all individuals with disabilities to live in their communities, 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 their 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 toward 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 their 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 their communities. States will see multiple benefits from this change; not only will people be 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 their communities.




Managing cost factors is one of the of the harder truths faced by Executive Directors of Medicaid agencies. 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 was proud to cosponsor this bill when I was in Congress. I was even more proud to join with every member of our Congressional delegation -- Democrat and Republican alike -- to cosponsor 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 the implementation of 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jared" and last name "Polis" clearly distinguishable.

Jared Polis
Governor
State of Colorado