



Colorado
Cross-Disability
Coalition

April 29, 2011

Governor signs bills to benefit thousands of people with disabilities – and without a dime of general fund-

Governor Hickenlooper signed two historic bills on April 26, 2011 that will improve the lives of thousands of Colorado Citizens with Disabilities by facilitating their independence and civic engagement –all without a mandate or a dime of general funds. Both bills had bipartisan support and are an example of how great work can come when people focus on the issues at hand and do the right thing by those most in need, according to Mark Simon, an activist in the disability community and the brainchild behind HB 11-1216.

HB 11-1216 is a unique bill that will allow the state to auction off status license plates that have been retired, but have some sentimental or other meaning, such as a plate that read VAIL or had numbers that were meaningful socially or individually. Plates will only be available for auction if they are retired and not in use so no one will lose a plate that he or she currently owns and uses. A bipartisan committee will be appointed to oversee the sales of these plates. Net profit from these sales will go into a cash fund that will create a The Laura Hershey Memorial Disability Benefits Support Program. This program will provide education, direct assistance and advocacy to enroll those who are eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, and Long Term Care Medicaid but who cannot get through the complicated application process. The program is estimated to take approximately five years to serve the entire state and will integrate technology with human resources to provide these services. Disability community leaders and advocates have developed a model. The Colorado Health Foundation provided support for the planning process, which was led by the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition (CCDC). The program is named after Laura Hershey, a lifelong Colorado resident who passed away last November. “Laura was part of the Coalition that put the project together and Laura was a woman who despite a very significant disability, always worked and remained an engaged and active citizen-she was a mentor to me and many others in our community” said Julie Reiskin, Director of CCDC. “The goal of this program is help people obtain supports such as Social Security or Medicaid as a way to improve their ability to fully participate in society, according to Senator Irene Aguilar, the Senate Sponsor. Laura Hershey was a role model. “ Too many people are led to believe that once they are declared disabled that they no longer have options. We want to let people know that in the State of Colorado everyone has the right and responsibility to be as active and engaged as possible and that we are going to have policies that support people with disabilities to live full lives, as Laura Hershey did” said

Representative Riesberg. This bill, the unique funding source and the broad coalition of organizations involved is exactly what I wanted to see happen and what I know can continue to happen.

Not only does the bill fund the disability benefit support program but it will put up to \$2.5 million in the general fund, a definite win-win according to Cheri Gerou- who along with Representative Jim Riesberg sponsored the bill. Both Democrats and Republicans credit the disability community for consistently coming to the table with proactive positive solutions on numerous policy issues. . Governor Hickenlooper also signed SB 11-183 today. This bill requires appointment of a representative from the disability community on the boards governing Medicaid, Housing and Human Services. "It was an honor for me to sponsor this bill and work with such passionate and dedicated individuals. " said Marsha Looper, one of the sponsors of the bill along with Representative Bob Gardner and Senator Irene Aguilar.

To learn more about Laura Hershey visit www.laurahershey.com