



February 14, 2018

I think this bill is not appropriate. I know the autism spectrum can seem frightening to people. It is not a disease in the same way that aids or flu. It is not transmitted from person to person. You do not catch it. Stating that autism is an epidemic is not correct.

Some research has shown that autism may be found at higher levels than before due to increased reporting as schools, parents, and medical professionals become more aware of the diagnosis and seek a determination. It is interesting that the bill states that no case of autism were reported in Colorado public schools before 1992. I and three classmates at Fairview High School were enrolled years prior to 1992. The schools became fully integrated around that period. Prior to integration, autistic students were in segregated facilities or home schooled.

Some of the things described in the bill make comparisons between unrelated items. The bill states autism is a disease. Some of the greatest scientific advances in recent decades were made by people who are either diagnosed as autistic or who fit the criteria by comparing known traits.

The bill states that the report of the governor's commission on autism only has resulted in one item accomplished in nine years. The ongoing committee designated by the governor meets quarterly. There are many achievements reported to this group. I think Corry Robinson could compile a list.

I think that doing a study focused on deficits are scare tactics and is a wrong approach. It can damage the lives of people with autism more than it might help them. The Autism Society of Colorado, The Developmental Disabilities Council Grantees, The Colorado Department of Education, and many other entities in the state have developed positive approaches for helping people with autism achieve their life goals. The objective is to find personal strengths and build on them, not to train them to stop being autistic.

I recommend this bill be tabled and that those who asked for the bill find other means of finding help for their autistic relatives and friends. That it was created without input from key autism entities in the state is interesting. They fail to quote sources for their data except in one or two places. This bill goes against the respectful approaches used over the past two to three decades to improve opportunities to Colorado citizens diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders.

Respectfully,

Michael Hoover

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