



Colorado  
Cross-Disability  
Coalition

Nothing about us, without us.

The Colorado Cross Disability Coalition supports HB 16-1308. CCDC is the largest disability rights organization in Colorado and is run by and for people with all types of disabilities. Many people with a variety of types of disabilities rely on service animals to perform daily tasks.

Service animals are a dog or miniature horse. They are individually trained to perform a specific function. Some people have their dogs trained by a company, some go to a trainer to teach the person how to manage the dog, and still others do self-training. All service dogs should be trained in basic obedience and be well behaved but the key is that the dog is trained to do a specific task. That task may be pulling a wheelchair, acting as a guide dog, a hearing dog, helping someone maintain balance, helping someone up from falls, or even medical alert. Some dogs are able to alert someone to an incoming seizure or manic episode or react to a specific anxiety reaction or even remind someone to take medication. People with all types of disabilities can benefit from a service dog but just having a disability and having a dog does not mean that the dog is a service dog. The specific test is if the animal is specifically trained to do a specific task related to the disability of the individual.

We want to avoid a mandatory "certification" and the Americans' with Disabilities Act prohibits certification requirements. The ADA also prohibits requirements for a specific type of marking such as a specific type of leash or harness. While there are good reasons for these prohibitions, this has also unfortunately opened the door for people to bring their pets into public spaces. Many of these pets are not properly behaved and are not trained to perform a specific task.

People often confuse a service animal with an ESA or emotional support animal. ESA is an animal that gives comfort and support to a person with a disability, often to someone who is isolated and lonely. ESAs are currently NOT allowed in public but are allowed in housing and air travel. ESAs require documentation from a health care professional, service animals do not.

This bill deals with service animals in places of public accommodation. This bill does not address ESAs. This bill is not going to solve all problems but it is a good first step to let the citizens of Colorado know that the intention is to follow the ADA and the CADA to allow only legitimate service dogs (or miniature horses if they exist) that are specifically trained to perform a specific task for a person with any type of disability will be allowed public access. This bill will help those of us who are disability advocates advocate within our own community for responsible application of the important right to have ones service dog. It will also protect legitimate service dogs from being attacked by untrained animals that have public access.

We urge your support of this bill.