

# Colorado leads the way

From my previous columns, many of you are aware that the financial viability of Community Options has been precarious for the past several years. Throw in a pandemic and the collapse of the economy, and this situation certainly hasn't gotten any better.

In the midst of this, however, the state of Colorado has been a national leader and model in its response to this crisis on behalf of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and the agencies that support them. We've heard horror stories from other states about agencies curtailing services, furloughing and laying off employees, or closing down completely. Fortunately, that has not been the case in Colorado.

At the onset of the crisis, the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing sought federal approval to provide services in alternative locations and remotely to minimize exposure, and authorized short-term retainer funding to keep providers viable. In partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, they also have provided frequent, on-going, timely information to help us navigate this "new normal" in service provision, and to keep people healthy and safe. As reported in my last column, the Department of Human Services has done the same relative to our Early Intervention program and allowed us the flexibility to continue serving infants and their families via tele-therapy.

Additionally, in drafting the "Stay-at-Home" and "Safer-at-



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## Community Options Ink

By Tom Turner

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Home" orders, Gov. Jared Polis included disability providers as critical businesses, allowing our employees to travel to and from work to continue providing daily supports in our group homes and other residential

settings, and he also ensured that hospital crisis plans did not discriminate against people with disabilities.

And last but certainly not least, our hearts go out to the members of the Joint Budget Committee and our local legislators who are struggling through the gut-wrenching process of cutting billions of dollars from all aspects of the state budget. We know they are doing their best to shelter the vulnerable people we serve from these devastating cuts.

We are incredibly grateful to all our state partners for their effective mobilization of government resources that have helped us keep the people we support and our staff healthy and safe. I also cannot say enough about our amazing employees and their herculean efforts during these difficult times. We've heard a lot about "heroes" lately, and these incredible people certainly rank among them.

We fully realize that this pandemic and the resulting economic impacts are far from over. Given our precarious financial situation entering this crisis, we also realize that we have difficult days and difficult decisions ahead. But somehow, when you're just trying to keep people alive, it puts those challenges in perspective.

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