



SB1378

Testimony of Bill Allan
Disability Policy Consortium
April 25, 2007

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am testifying in favor of SB1378 and I will be recommending modifications.

There is no question of the need for the bill. People with mental health disorders and people who have cognitive or developmental disabilities do indeed have interaction with police that are less than satisfactory for both themselves and the police.

The Disability Policy Consortium is a cross-disability organization with 16 Board members who are people with disabilities. Thirty percent of my Board report person or peer-group problems with police in similar circumstance as this bill seeks to correct. Three of the people have disabilities that are not included in this proposed legislation.

People with brain injuries, chemical sensitivities or epilepsy may exhibit aberrant behavior that can be misjudged. Lack of response from people who are deaf or hard of hearing may be mis-understood. People on the autism spectrum may react to stress in a way that may not be appropriate.

We have had conversations with representatives of major adult onset disabilities such as Ataxia, Parkinsons Disease, Huntingtons Disease and Multiple Sclerosis who also say their members occasionally experience problems with police because of a lack of understanding about how their disability presents, particularly in times of stress.

We are recommending a change in language to include a broader definition of disability. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you on revising the definition.