



**Domestic Violence Initiative**  
Serving Women, Men and Children with Disabilities

April 30, 2017

Denver City Council Members  
1437 Bannock Street  
Denver, CO 80202  
c/o Skye Stuart and Debra Bartleson

To the Members of City Council:

On behalf of Domestic Violence Initiative, I ask that you support the proposed municipal sentencing reform ordinance. Domestic Violence Initiative (DVI) provides services for women and men with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence. Under the current ordinances, defendants convicted of park curfew violations can receive the same sentences as defendants convicted of third and subsequent domestic violence offenses, even when the victims are at-risk adults. The disparity of such convictions is incongruent, illogical and dangerous.

Crimes in which the defendant has immediate, easy access to the victims put the victims at increased risk of subsequent and escalated harm. This reality is compounded for those victims who have disabilities or who are elderly. Victims with disabilities face unique challenges and barriers to safety: they are more isolated, be targeted because of their different abilities, and may not have the language skills to describe the abuse. Moreover, research shows that a woman with a disability is 85% more likely to be a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault than a woman without disabilities.

Crimes of domestic violence charged at the municipal (vs. misdemeanor or felony) level should not be considered "low risk" and crimes against differently-abled and at-risk adults should be addressed at every level. All people with disabilities and their children have a right to live in safety, free of abuse.

I appreciate the work done by the City Attorney's Office to rectify the inequities in Denver's municipal sentencing in such a way that better protects victims of domestic violence and at-risk adults. I encourage City Council members to adopt this sentencing reform ordinance on behalf of victims and all members of our community, regardless of age or ability.

If you have any questions regarding my recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact me at 303-839-5510 Ext 101.

Sincerely,

Ashlee Lewis  
Executive Director  
Domestic Violence Initiative

899 Logan St. Suite 310  
Denver, Co 80203

Visit us on the web  
[www.dviforwomen.org](http://www.dviforwomen.org)

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