



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

March 19, 2014

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D., Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding **H.B. No. 5534 - An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.**

First I would like to applaud the efforts of the authors of this bill for making a bold statement regarding the needs of families who are on our residential waiting list. Highlighting the issue is certainly part of the process needed to create sustainable solutions.

In this regard, DDS encourages the exploration of many possible methods to address our residential waiting list and expand services to more individuals with intellectual disability and their families. As you know, DDS has been deeply invested over the last three years in redesigning our services to make maximum use of our available resources to serve more families. We have, in fact, received national recognition for our efforts. Gradually, DDS has been able to move some individuals from more expensive and less responsive settings to more individualized services that better meet their needs. Some individuals have moved out of institutional settings and others have moved out of group homes or other congregate settings. The overall number of individuals moving into less restrictive settings has been increasing. Families, self-advocates, providers, and community organizations have all been important stakeholders and central to the partnership that is supporting a conversion from a legacy system to more sustainable options for individuals and families.

While there may be some attractive qualities to **H.B. No. 5534**, it must be noted that creating an array of entitlement services for persons with intellectual disability, for now and for the foreseeable future, is an extremely complicated and astronomically expensive task. The study portion of this bill alone would require enormous resources as the scope of work required far exceeds the capabilities of DDS staff.

There is only one other state in the country, California, who has chosen the route of “entitlement” services for adults with intellectual disability. Although California has been at this for many years, their efforts have not eliminated their waiting list. Additionally, and most importantly, is

the fact that individuals who receive services from California's system receive far smaller budgets than Connecticut families have come to expect.

The best formula for expanding services to Connecticut families includes 1) continuing to redesign the DDS system to rely less on traditional service models, and 2) continually expanding partnerships with families, local communities and providers to create innovative community supports. Investing in innovation is a sustainable strategy. The work DDS has been doing recently shows that there are a large number of families, providers and self-advocates who are fully committed to "finding another way".

We will always live in a world that has finite resources. Building a system that entitles every eligible person to services is not only unsustainable it is not achievable. Moving in that direction will be enormously expensive and the end product will be that "everyone" will have a very little resource.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on **H.B. No. 5534**. Please contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066, if you have any questions for us.