



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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

March 5, 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. 5457](#) - **An Act Concerning the Collection of Data by Health and Human Services Agencies**.

[H.B. No. 5457](#) would require certain state agencies to collect and maintain identifying information concerning the persons such agencies serve. It appears that this bill would require multiple agencies, including DDS, to collect specific primary data regarding individuals eligible for state programs and services.

Currently, DDS's application for eligibility requests that applicants include their race, ethnicity, gender and primary language. However, race, ethnicity and language are optional. Eligibility for DDS funding and services is not based on income level, but rather on a specific disability diagnosis, therefore a person's or a family's income level is not requested. DDS maintains residential addresses for all its consumers. DDS's internal client database or automated information system, which is referred to as CAMRIS, has fields for gender, race/ethnicity (not separate), primary language and disability.

While DDS supports the idea that better data collection and data sharing can lead to better planning and outcomes for individuals who receive services from the agency, the legislation raises several questions for the department. It is not clear from the proposal how the information would be collected. Who would have access to this data and for what purposes would it be used? Would DDS be required to collect this information for individuals who are already eligible or just collect this information for those newly eligible? Would individuals be required to provide the requested information and what would happen if they do not? Would non-submission of requested information have an impact on a person's eligibility? Depending on how the data was to be collected, DDS could have to modify its data system and review the data for individuals already in our system. While we have already recognized the need to work on improving data collection, there would need to be some lead time given to the department or the initial data would not be as accurate as it should be. We would appreciate the opportunity to explore this legislation further and be part of any discussions if the bill moves forward.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on **House Bill 5457**. Please contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs, at (860) 418-6066 if you have any questions for us regarding this bill.

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