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Department of Developmental Services

**DDS**

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

**March 7, 2017**

Senators Gerratana and Somers, Representatives Steinberg and Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Jordan A. Scheff, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **Proposed H.B. No. 5808 AN ACT STREAMLINING FILINGS ACROSS STATE AGENCIES OF FAMILIES RECEIVING SERVICES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES.**

DDS certainly appreciates the frustrations of families enduring the multiple processes required by various state and federal agencies, and is constantly striving to make processes easier for individuals and families as well as staff and providers.

The work of DDS is, and will continue to be, grounded in a commitment to the individuals and their families that we support. Despite increasing demands and shrinking resources, we strive each day to provide high quality supports to as many individuals as possible. In addition, we work to engage with individuals and families, seeking input and involvement wherever possible.

Beginning with eligibility for services, the Eligibility Unit at DDS is responsible for receiving, organizing, and processing documents needed to make a determination of eligibility for DDS's supports and services as well as for the Department of Social Services' autism spectrum disorder program. The eligibility unit manages the application process, works with families, schools, physician's offices, and other agencies to obtain needed documents and maintains the eligibility website which serves as a resource for eligibility forms.

Approximately 3,000 applications and over 15,000 documents are received by the Eligibility Unit every year. Since July of 2016, paper forms are now scanned into a digital format and stored in a secure electronic eligibility database accessible to specified DSS and DDS staff throughout the state, thereby reducing the need to file and store paper files. Missing documents are quickly identified in this electronic format reducing decision wait times. Because data exists in an electronic format, the analysis of compiled data is more immediate, enabling the department to identify trends more quickly.

There are many projects outlined in the Department's recently published **DDS Five Year Plan (2017-2022)** which work to fulfill the goal of this proposed legislation.

While innovation, transformation, and excellence are the goal, we also must remember that we are asked to do more with less, and promote sustainability in any changes we seek. To that end, DDS has focused on Lean-driven activities to streamline the operations of the agency in recent years. This work will continue as demonstrated by the following projects:

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- Streamlining Providers' Administrative Burdens – This project will perform an in-depth review of provider requirements in order to identify every opportunity to reduce redundant or non-value added activities and efforts. The project outputs will support our commitment to ensure the rapid and systematic reduction of unnecessary administrative burdens placed upon the provider community.
- Balancing Incentives Program (BIP) & Universal Assessment Implementation – This work strives toward a “No Wrong Door” approach toward access by Connecticut citizens’ into Long Term Supports and Services (LTSS). The work, coordinated by DSS, involves a Universal Application process to apply for services from LTSS agencies. This system will also include a Universal Assessment which will replace the existing DDS Level of Need (LON) tool and will be utilized by all LTSS agencies. DDS will need to continue its work with DSS and the other LTSS agencies to ensure that both the Universal Application and Assessment meet DDS eligibility and assessment needs. DDS will also need to work with the statewide Information Technology division through the Department of Administrative Services to develop a reciprocal data system at DDS that can receive data on Universal Assessments created and to accommodate the Universal Application as a part of the DDS Eligibility process.
- Streamlining Electronic Licensing Management – The Electronic Licensing Management System (ELMS) is an enterprise solution approach to licensing provider settings, involving multiple state agencies deploying a common technology platform. After a Lean process, requirements were identified and agencies worked together to select a product that met common needs. This project will focus on the transition of licensing data to a new platform as well as implementation of new workflow processes based upon capabilities present in the new system. The new system will allow 100% electronic processing of licensing activities, including provider access for system-managed plans of correction for citations. Automation and electronic distribution will be deliverables along with the need for provider and staff training on system usage.
- Provider Electronic Enrollment Implementation – This project will represent the implementation phase of an ongoing project collaborating with DSS to align the DDS Medicaid Performing Provider data in the DDS system with the data in the DSS systems. This will enable providers to self-enroll as Medicaid Performing Providers and establish electronic verification processes to remove the need for providers to mail documentation to DSS. Data validation, provider training, and interdepartmental data exchange will allow auditing of progress of provider enrollment and all deliverables.
- Web IP-6 Payment – This project is ongoing as we seek to bring the payment modules for each of our contracted services into our newly deployed .NET web environment. This will allow broader access to payment information; provide enhanced security of both users and data and streamline work through use of a single log-in via the DDS Application menu. Once completed, DDS will sunset our Microsoft Access database payments module.
- Case Management Optimization – This project will define the responsibility of the case management position and provide formats to increase effectiveness and caseload management. It will review required documentation and data management and reduce any redundant and time consuming activities. This project will create a format for case managers and their supervisors to establish prioritization of their job responsibilities. The outcome of this project will help to meet federal and DDS requirements and potentially increase federal reimbursement.

- “Front Door” Information Packet – This project will result in the development of “welcome packets” for specific stakeholder groups. Information needed to become oriented with an agency and its functions can be hard to find. A key step toward putting individuals and families at the center of our everyday work is to do a better job at getting key information to individuals and their families, new providers, new staff, and other stakeholders. This information must also be consistently messaged and distributed across the state.

DDS has been engaged in discussions around modernizing data systems and information technology for some time. This project must continue, and in fact ramp up, in the upcoming five-year period. Building on the foundation of the nearly-complete Microsoft Access Database Migration project, in which data housed in Microsoft Access has been moved to a more stable environment, the agency is now better poised to move forward. Reporting and business intelligence capabilities must be built out and platforms for modernized systems explored. Multiple projects will likely grow out of this initiative as we near implementation.

Additionally, DDS has taken strides to streamline processes or reduce administrative burdens on families by: (1) Streamlining the Community First Choice (CFC) application process with DSS by using DDS’s current Level of Need (LON) assessment instead of having the family complete a new one; (2) Working with all state partners in the “no wrong door” or “single point of entry” initiatives; and (3) Working with DSS to review and streamline the disability review component for Husky C applicants who are DDS eligible participants.

These are only some examples and certainly not an exhaustive list of the ways DDS is striving to make processes better for families.

I assure you that staff are very responsive to requests for streamlining processes where possible. It is our understanding that this legislation may have stemmed from a constituent complaint about a specific rent subsidy documentation form. In the past, DDS had explored moving from monthly to quarterly reporting and had explored other strategies to reduce frequency of this filing for families and providers. This discussion has recently been revived and I commit to having staff review the perceived obstacles and propose some potential solutions.

It is also important to note that in some cases there are very good reasons for why information is collected including to meet federal requirements, legislative mandates, or waiver assurances, or to provide verification of eligibility, etc. As an agency, we must balance individual and family demands with potential jeopardy of funding or federal reimbursement.

I look forward to continuing the progress DDS has made in working with all stakeholders, including individuals and families, to streamline processes for all. As you should be able to tell from the many examples above, legislation is not necessary to make this happen. DDS has the same goal as our numerous stakeholders when it comes to providing the best services in the most effective ways possible.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony on **Proposed [H.B. No. 5808](#) AN ACT STREAMLINING FILINGS ACROSS STATE AGENCIES OF FAMILIES RECEIVING SERVICES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have for me at this time, and I look forward to working with all of you throughout the legislative session.