



**Governor Ned Lamont
State of Connecticut**



FACT SHEET
2019 Legislative Session

**HOUSE BILL 7163
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES**

Summary of Proposal:

This bill changes the name of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to the Department of Aging and Disability Services to reflect the elimination of the State Department on Aging and merger into DORS in Public Act 18-179.

Reason for Proposal:

The Department of Rehabilitation Services is an aging and disability services agency, but the name of the agency has not evolved to reflect the inclusion of aging services.

The agency was originally created in 2011 by Public Act 11-44, bringing together a myriad of disability programs. Initially named the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, the new Bureau created the opportunity to better align existing resources and improve services to Connecticut residents with disabilities. Public Act 12-1 renamed the agency to the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

In 2017, the State Department on Aging (SDA) was eliminated as a stand-alone agency. The legislation split the two main components of SDA, leaving the services intact but moving the State Unit on Aging to the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). Concern was raised by the advocacy community about splitting up these two interrelated units, and further discussion took place between the legislative and executive branch. As DORS was already providing almost all of the administrative functions for SDA prior to the agency's elimination, the agreement was to keep the two components together and seek a statutory change to move both under DORS. Continuity of services was assured by, first, immediately entering into a three-way agreement between DORS, DSS, and OPM, and then beginning a transition process in which DORS could support the aging programs without interruption.

Public Act 18-169 formalized that transition process, and both the State Unit on Aging and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program became part of the new DORS structure. This created the foundation upon which DORS has started to build a strong aging and disability network.

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Over the past year, DORS has engaged in an active strategic planning process to ensure that the agency is responding to both the challenges and the opportunities arising from the addition of aging services. Key stakeholders within both the aging and disability communities were identified and consulted about a vision for a new aging and disability services model. As part of these discussions, stakeholders were engaged about agency services, mission, and identity.

The agency has a vision for a model that focuses on functional need, rather than solely on an individual's or specific disability. This vision has resonated with both the aging and disability communities, and although there was no consensus on a name that would be a perfect fit for the agency, stakeholders identified the following:

- Strong support for including both aging and disability in the name and mission to expand the agency's current identity;
- Strong support for including the concept of independence;
- Strong support for modernizing the language. Many groups supported the idea of moving away from the term "rehabilitation" as it does not reflect the services provided to older adults and, in fact, does not fully reflect all of the services provided to individuals with disabilities; and
- Consensus support for a proposed new mission - *"Maximizing opportunities for the independence and well-being of people with disabilities and older adults in Connecticut."*

Significant Impacts:

The name change does not require funding. Any costs related to the name change, such as for signage or brochures, can be absorbed within the Department's existing appropriations if the change is effective October 1, 2019 or later. The purpose of the agency will remain intact.