



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Ned Lamont
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner

Peter Mason
Deputy Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
February 19, 2019**

Senators Moore and Logan, Representatives Abercrombie and Case and members of the Human Services Committee. I am Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **H.B. No. 7093 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.**

The department appreciates the intent of this proposed bill. DDS considers access to quality, supportive employment a priority for the individuals we serve. Employment not only provides an opportunity for individuals to become active, engaged and contributing members of their community, but it also brings a heightened sense of self-worth that all Connecticut residents, including individuals with intellectual disability, deserve.

DDS offers an array of supportive employment services that assist individuals in meeting their employment-related goals. Supports may include assistance with obtaining and maintaining competitive, integrated employment or opportunities to explore different career paths by learning different work skills in a community or residentially-based setting.

In addition, DDS has been working to integrate customized employment into our continuum of employment supports. Customized employment is designed to assist individuals with complex needs with their ability to work competitively. The model focuses on matching the individual's strengths with an employer who has expressed the need for that specific strength, while providing a team approach to employment planning. Once the individual is matched with an employer, the department will continue to provide ongoing natural supports to ensure a successful employment experience. Working in collaboration with the State Department of Education (SDE) and the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), we will continue to formalize and expand the options for customized employment throughout the state.

From an interagency perspective, the FY 2019 budget appropriated \$1.5 million to the Intellectual Disability (ID) Partnership. In collaboration with the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and community partners, part of this ID Partnership funding is being utilized to encourage and support the employment of individuals with intellectual disability by (1) providing grants for alternative business models; (2) offering trainings and education to providers and businesses; and (3) establishing a revolving loan fund for startup costs. The department is committed to

continuing to expand our employment-related supports and utilizing creative ways to engage business in hiring individuals with intellectual disability.

To that end, the Department currently is a member of the Connecticut Governor's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities. Reconfigured in 2014, the Committee's mission is to promote employment of people with disabilities, consult with and advise the Department of Labor's (DOL) Commissioner on such details. The Committee membership includes a vast array of executive branch agencies, the business community, non-profit organizations and persons with disabilities. A full list of the Committee membership along with meeting agendas and notes from 2014 can be found on the CT DOL website at: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/ctgovcomitemp.htm>

The department and the state are committed to continuing an inclusive discussion on how to increase employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disability. However, this legislation would duplicate a current standing committee.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding [H.B. No. 7093](#) **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**. Please contact Krista Ostaszewski, DDS Director of Legislative Affairs at (860) 418-6066 with additional questions.