



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 APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
March 1, 2019**

Good Morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to testify in support of **H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

The mission of DDS is to partner with the individuals we support and their families, to support lifelong planning and to join with others to create and promote meaningful opportunities for individuals to fully participate as valued members of their communities. Nearly 17,000 individuals are currently determined eligible for support from DDS and the department is committed to continuing to evolve in a way that allows us to support as many individuals as possible within available funding.

By working collaboratively with the department's many stakeholders, DDS has had great success in expanding our continuum of services and community integration, while continuing to find efficiencies in the way the department operates. I would like to take this opportunity to thank individuals with intellectual disability, their families, advocates, private providers and DDS employees for engaging with the department and continuing to inform our priorities. Together, we work to make the system better for everyone with intellectual disability.

It is important to note that the DDS Residential Services Program is located in the Department of Social Services budget in the line item "Community Residential Services". The account was transferred to DSS in FY 2017 for the purpose of maximizing Medicaid reimbursement. DDS residential services are still contracted and operated under the purview of DDS. Therefore, items highlighted in this testimony will also include those represented in the DSS Community Residential Services account.

**DDS Accomplishments and Ongoing Investments**

Over the past year, with the legislature's support, DDS has made significant progress on multiple initiatives to expand the department's continuum of supports. Governor Lamont's proposed biennial budget for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 continues to invest in many of these initiatives to ensure ongoing success and continued development. These items include:

- A \$5 million appropriation in FY 2019 for emergency placements, which has been used to develop crisis prevention and intervention strategies to deescalate crisis situations and prevent long-term hospital emergency department stays. With this funding, the department launched a six bed, Step

Phone: 860 418-6000 ♦ TDD 860 418-6079 ♦ Fax: 860 418-6001

460 Capitol Avenue ♦ Hartford, Connecticut 06106

[www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) ♦ e-mail: [ddsct.co@ct.gov](mailto:ddsct.co@ct.gov)

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Up/Step Down Unit, to support individuals in crisis and in need of behavioral stabilization, who are coming from community-based settings or hospital emergency departments. DDS also has expanded our Individual and Family Support Teams, specifically focusing on increasing capacity to provide rapid support to individuals living in community-based settings who may be near or experiencing a crisis. In both programs, DDS will act as an intermediate support focused on stabilization, ultimately transitioning individuals to community-based providers for ongoing services.

Governor Lamont's proposed budget annualizes this FY 2019 funding to reflect the full year costs for each of these initiatives.

- A \$1.5 million appropriation in FY 2019 for the Intellectual Disability (ID) Partnership. In collaboration with the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the community partners represented on the ID Partnership Advisory Council, this funding is being utilized to support the ID Partnership's four priorities: (1) support the employment of individuals with intellectual disability by providing funding for alternative business models (2) pilot an initiative that establishes a combination residential and day service account (3) fund provider trainings on promotion and implementation of assistive technology; and (4) provide education to DDS qualified providers on direct Medicaid billing.

Governor Lamont's proposed budget maintains the \$1.5 million funding for the ID Partnership in each year of the biennium.

- **[Special Act No. 18-5](#) AN ACT CONCERNING MINIMUM EMPLOYEE WAGES FOR PROVIDERS OF STATE-ADMINISTERED SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES** allowed OPM to allocate funds to increase the wages of certain employees of DDS qualified private providers. Specifically, the Act makes available funding for providers to pay a minimum wage of not less than \$14.75 per hour to employees who work in support of DDS-funded programs. Wages for these employees must be increased to \$14.75 or by up to 5%, whichever is greater.

Governor Lamont's proposed budget provides funding in each year of the biennium to support these wage adjustments through 2021. Adjustments are reflected in both the DDS and DSS budgets for the individual increases. A total of \$58.1 million is distributed between the three major grant accounts that fund DDS qualified providers: the Behavioral Services Program and Employment/Day Program accounts housed at DDS and the Community Residential Services account housed at DSS. This funding will be disseminated to DDS qualified providers to ensure that their employees continue to receive a living wage.

- The FY 2019 budget also provided funding for housing supports. Through an interagency collaboration, the Department of Housing (DOH), the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), and DDS implemented a Notice of Funding Availability for the Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder Housing (IDASH) Program in 2016. The IDASH Program funds the development of mixed-use, affordable housing units, including supportive units. Through this notice of funding, interested developers have partnered with DDS qualified providers to develop innovative housing models in fully integrated community settings. This housing model supports the best outcomes for individuals in a cost efficient way that reflects the national trend away from congregate care models towards integrated community settings.

Along with housing supports, IDASH focused on the use of assistive technology, including face-to-face video, remote supports with choice, and automated medication administration to ensure that individuals are able to live as independently as possible while maintaining the appropriate level of direct care staff supports. Ensuring that individuals have access to employment opportunities, transportation, natural supports, and community resources means that individuals can live lives of their choosing with less reliance on traditional location-based supports.

DDS and DOH, so far, have approved two developments with 19 combined units which will serve 39 individuals upon building completion, projected to occur in early 2020. Additional applications for developments are under review.

Governor Lamont's proposed budget provides \$1 million in FY 2021 to annualize funding for rental assistance and wrap-around supports for 70 individuals residing in the supportive housing units.

### **Items of Interest in Governor Lamont's Proposed Budget**

Governor Lamont's proposed budget provides an overall increase to the department's budget. This important investment ensures delivery of services for individuals with intellectual disability and provides for a continuum of creative initiatives that will help individuals with intellectual disability to live and thrive in their communities.

#### *Caseload Growth*

The Governor's proposed budget includes funding for caseload growth for individuals supported by DDS.

Specifically, within the Employment Opportunities and Day Services account, in FY 2020, \$9.94 million is provided for caseload growth under employment opportunities and day service placements. This funding is projected to serve:

- 324 individuals graduating high school;
- 112 individuals who will be aging out of services provided by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or local education agencies (LEAs); and
- 24 individuals transitioning through MFP.

In FY 2021 an additional \$20.85 million is provided in the DDS budget for caseload growth under employment opportunities and day service placements. This funding is projected to serve:

- 369 individuals graduating high school;
- 79 individuals who will be aging out of services provided by DCF or LEAs; and
- 24 individuals transitioning through MFP.

Within the DSS Community Residential Services line item, the Governor's budget includes an additional \$10.92 million in FY 2020 and \$27.47 million in FY 2021 for caseload growth. These appropriations are projected to serve:

- 77 individuals in FY 2020 and 67 individuals in FY 2021 who will be aging out of services provided by DCF or LEAs; and
- 65 individuals in FY 2020 and 53 individuals in FY 2021 transitioning through MFP, including Southbury Training School or court-ordered placements.

#### *Annualize 2019 Community Living Arrangement Conversions and Closures*

The Governor's budget annualizes savings of \$8.2 million from the conversion or closure of 10 public residential programs over the course of FY 2019.

*Behavioral Services, Employment and Day Services and Community Residential Services Programs*  
Adjustments reflect a combined reduction of \$2.04 million in FY 2020 and \$2.45 million in FY 2021. The department anticipates this savings can be met through modest efficiencies within each program, as the system continues to evolve.

*Additional Adjustments*

As Southbury Training School continues to see its census decline and with the department's ongoing commitment to allow residents the opportunity to move into the community, the proposed budget achieves savings through the closure of one Southbury Training School cottage. The budget also reflects the closure of one public Community Living Arrangement in each year of the biennium, which will be achieved as the census in public services continues to trend down.

The department would like to express our deepest thanks to all of the DDS partners including the legislature, for their ongoing commitment to individuals with intellectual disability. The department believes Governor Lamont's proposed budget reflects the dedication of the various stakeholders that have worked so hard to advocate for the individuals we serve. We look forward to continuing our work together and expanding our ability to provide high quality services that support individuals with intellectual disability in achieving their personal goals within their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Governor Lamont's proposed budget. 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.