



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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

**March 14, 2022**

Senators Anwar, Somers and Hwang, Representatives Steinberg and Petit and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Peter Mason, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **S.B. No. 373 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES' RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES AND THE FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL.**

This bill would repeal sections 17a-219a to 17a-219c, inclusive, of the general statutes. These statutes concern the coordination and provision of “family supports” for children with disabilities by DDS and includes the appointed Family Support Council.

DDS was made the state’s coordinator of “family supports” for children with disabilities in 1994. At that time the Birth to Three Program was a part of DDS, which provided some rationale for DDS being put in charge of family supports for children with disabilities, though then, as now, DDS is primarily an adult services agency. The Birth to Three Program was moved to the Office of Early Childhood in 2015.

The charge to provide “family support services” defined in 17a-219a and 17a-219b is very broad and includes educational disabilities and various “developmental disabilities” that are beyond the scope of DDS’s expertise which is “intellectual disability.” The charge in these statutes for providing “family supports” includes “cash subsidies” along with “services” and “goods” for families and these items appear nowhere in the DDS budget. The federal law referenced in the statute also broadens the mandates that are placed on DDS including the age to which “family supports” should be provided (i.e., up to the age of 22).

The elimination of the Family Support Council (FSC) has already effectively taken place. Because of serious turmoil among the Council’s membership (see section 137 of [Public Act 09-7](#) of the September Special Session where the Family Support Council statute was amended so as to facilitate the removal of an unruly member) and the incorporation of the FSC subcommittee’s charge in the creation of the Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN) (<https://ctfsn.org/>), which became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2010, the Council experienced a decline in attendance to the point where a quorum of the 28-member Family Support Council could not be achieved. The Family Support Council suspended its meetings for repeatedly not having a quorum approximately 5 years ago.

Repealing these statutes would not affect DDS’s provision of family support services to families of individuals with intellectual disability. It would remove a requirement that DDS coordinate and provide family supports for children with disabilities, which was never a good fit with the department’s statutory

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charge and became an even worse fit once the Birth to Three Program moved to the Office of Early Childhood.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on [S.B. No. 373](#) **AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES' RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES AND THE FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL**. Please contact Kevin Bronson, DDS Director of Communications, Legislation and Regulations at 860-550-3497 with any questions.