



State of Connecticut  
**Department of Aging and Disability Services**

**Amy Porter – Commissioner**

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
February 19, 2020**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee - my name is Amy Porter and I am Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS). I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify in support of Governor Lamont's recommended midterm budget adjustments for FY 2021. Our agency is grateful that Governor Lamont's budget continues his administration's commitment to persons with disabilities and older adults.

I should point out that, with the passage last session of Public Act 19-157, our agency's name changed and this is the first time that I appear before you as the agency head for the Department of Aging and Disability Services.

To remind members of the Committee, our Department's mission is "to maximize opportunities for the independence and well-being of people with disabilities and older adults in Connecticut."

We have a diverse set of services that generally fall into five categories: employment, education, independent living, access and advocacy. We deliver these services with an incredible staff of approximately 450 dedicated professionals. ADS operates with a budget of approximately \$95 million, almost 75% of which comes from the federal government. On a state level, we receive funding from the General Fund, the Workers' Compensation Fund and the Insurance Fund. On a federal level, we receive funding from the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Labor and the Social Security Administration.

The Governor's adjustments to the second year of the biennial budget, (House Bill 5005, An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021) make only a few notable changes to the appropriations for the Department, resulting in a minimal decrease of \$41,249.

There are proposed changes within five of our agency line items:

- 1) An increase of \$421,941 in the Vocational Rehabilitation – Disabled line from \$7,279,075 to \$7,701,016.

This program assists individuals with disabilities to prepare for, enter, maintain or advance in employment. It is a federal/state partnership, with the federal contribution being 78.7% and a required state match of 21.3%.

Funding in the amount of \$335,316 is reallocated from the Employment Opportunities program to the Vocational Rehabilitation program to maximize federal funding and allow us to meet federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements.

An increase of \$86,625 is also provided to support the increased minimum wage for contract service providers, particularly our Community Rehabilitation Providers.

- 2) A decrease of \$618,990 in the Employment Opportunities – Blind & Disabled line from \$1,021,990 to \$403,000.

This account provides long-term job supports for individuals with the most significant disabilities after they have been able to maintain competitive employment for a minimum of 90 days. Several years ago, this program was restructured to focus on individuals working in competitive, integrated employment, which resulted in an overall savings. Support hours were capped with the ability to request additional hours if needed. This program does not have a waiting list.

This restructuring will allow us to continue to meet existing need, achieve a reduction of \$283,674 and reallocate \$335,316 to the Vocational Rehabilitation program (see item #1 above).

- 3) An increase of \$300,000 in the Programs for Senior Citizens line from \$3,278,743 to \$3,578,743.

This increase reflects a reallocation of funding from the Department of Social Services for the Center for Medicare Advocacy to provide additional resources to assist individuals and their families to obtain fair access to Medicare and necessary care and avoid becoming Medicaid eligible.

- 4) An increase of \$210,506 in the Elderly Nutrition line from \$2,626,390 to \$2,836,896.

The additional funds will support the increased minimum wage for contract service providers, most particularly for those people employed in meal preparation and delivery in our Elderly Nutrition programs.

- 5) A decrease of \$355,422 in our Personal Services line from \$7,408,609 to \$7,053,187.

This adjustment reflects a reallocation of \$369,729 for the migration of the Human Resources staff from our agency into the Department of Administrative Services consistent with a state-wide centralization of those services.

Also, an increase of \$14,307 is provided to support the salary adjustments for bargaining agreements approved in the 2019 legislative session.

Again, I want to thank Governor Lamont for his ongoing commitment to serving people with disabilities and the older residents of Connecticut. This budget allows the dedicated staff at the Department of Aging and Disability Services to continue working to maximize opportunities for the independence and well-being of people with disabilities and older adults in Connecticut.

I thank the committee for its time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.