



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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Governor

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Commissioner

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Deputy Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
February 21, 2020**

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. 5005](#) **AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021.**

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. More than 17,000 individuals are currently eligible for funding and services from DDS and the department is committed to utilizing innovative ways 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 with a focus on 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.

Fiscal Year 2020 Highlights

Before discussing the specifics of the Governor's proposed budget adjustments for FY 2021, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the important progress the department has made this year, with the support of the legislature, to improve the quality of services that we offer.

- In the adjusted FY 2019 budget, DDS was appropriated \$5 million for emergency placements. With the support of the Governor and the legislature, this funding was annualized over the FY 2020-2021 biennial budget which allowed us to continue our efforts in developing crisis prevention and intervention strategies to deescalate crisis situations and prevent long-term hospital emergency department stays.

With this annualized funding DDS was able to open a five bed Step Up/Step Down Unit to support adults in crisis and in need of behavioral stabilization. Referrals to the unit may come from community-based settings (step up) or higher levels of care, such as hospital emergency departments

(step down). The unit opened in March 2019 and has since supported 12 individuals, successfully transitioning seven of them back into community-based living. Based on the success of this initiative, DDS is reviewing opportunities to develop similar services and expand the supports already provided.

- Employment is an integral part of the DDS continuum of services, which provides meaningful opportunities for individuals to share their unique abilities and contribute to their community. DDS is committed to expanding integrated employment opportunities that focus on job-related skill development for individuals with intellectual disability.

Through funds appropriated to the ID Partnership Initiatives line item, DDS, in collaboration with the ID Partnership, launched the Intellectual Disability Partnership Innovative Employment Outcomes Pilot Program. Interested entities were asked to submit business plans for an innovative or alternative business model that employs or encourages the employment of individuals with intellectual disability. Grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 were awarded to 19 entities, totaling \$515,000.

Grant funds were used by an entrepreneur who makes her own stress balls, a startup café, a business that makes homemade dog biscuits, and a DJ company that has an impressive event resume; just to name a few! The department hopes these business models will provide a framework for other entities interested in similar work.

- DDS continues to address housing needs with innovative approaches that focus on independence, integration and community-based settings within the state.

The Intellectual Disabilities & Autism Spectrum Disorder Housing (IDASH) program is an interagency collaboration between DDS, the Department of Housing and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to fund the development of mixed-use, affordable housing units. Property developers partnered with DDS qualified providers to develop innovative housing models in fully integrated community settings. Currently, projects in Canton, Bloomfield and Hartford are underway for a combined total of 27 units serving approximately 48 individuals upon completion. The program focuses on residences that are public transit-accessible and close to local work opportunities and which are built to foster independence by utilizing smart home and assistive technology.

Items of Interest in Governor Lamont's FY 2021 Proposed Budget Adjustments

Governor Lamont's proposed FY 2021 budget adjustments allow DDS to think creatively about how we can offer individuals more appropriate and less-intensive residential settings that focus on helping individuals to live and thrive in their community.

It is important to note that the funding for 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 also will include those represented in the DSS Community Residential Services account.

Increase Use of Rent Subsidies to Support Transitions to More Appropriate Levels of Care

The Governor's proposed adjustments transfers \$778,560 from the DSS Community Residential Services line item to the Rent Subsidy program at DDS with the intent of transitioning about 160 individuals into integrated and independent residential options that utilize more cost-effective services including

continuous residential supports and individualized home supports. DDS projects this initiative to result in a net savings of \$1,021,440.

Implement an Incentive Payment System for Providers Transitioning Individuals to Less Intensive Settings

Under the DSS Community Residential Services line item, the Governor’s adjustments propose an incentive payment option for DDS qualified providers. Specifically, the option allows providers to be reimbursed 80% of their payment for individuals that they have transitioned to a lower level of care. These payments will not be subject to cost settlement. DDS projects savings of \$1,750,000 through this initiative.

Additional Adjustments

- To reflect natural attrition based on current caseload requirements, the department’s Behavioral Services Program is reduced by \$2,000,000. As DDS does not have a waiting list for this program, we are anticipating the ability to serve all eligible individuals within the proposed appropriation.
- The Governor’s adjustments allow DDS to hire approximately 100 new part-time direct care staff to fill vacancies currently being covered by full-time staff, who are being paid overtime wages. DDS estimates this change will save \$1,003,127.
- A reallocation of \$2,428,932 is proposed in the DDS Personal Services line item to reflect the human resources centralization efforts outlined in Governor Lamont’s [Executive Order No. 2](#).
- The DSS Community Residential Services line item includes an increase of \$1,920,000 based on a transfer from DSS related to Community Companion Home (CCH) funding. This transfer is pursuant to sections 294, 296, 298 and 299 of [Public Act No. 19-117](#), which allowed DDS to improve the payment mechanism of the CCH program, effective January 1, 2020.

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. 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 recommended budget adjustments for FY 2021. 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.