

Public Hearing on

**H.B. 5005 - An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021
Appropriations Committee
February 21, 2020**

Good evening Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker and Representative Lavielle, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Collette Bement and I am the parent of 33-year old son, Scott, with intellectual disabilities. I am a member and Secretary for the Arc of Connecticut Board of Directors. I am also a member of the Intellectual Disability Partnership Advisory Committee (IDPAC), the DDS North Region Advisory and Planning Committee (RAC), and the Northeastern Connecticut Families for Families advocacy group. I am upset about HB 5005 with regards to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) budget.

I have been testifying before or submitting testimony to the Appropriations Committee since 2013 after a letter was sent to parents by then DDS Commissioner Terry Macy which indicated that individuals on the DDS Waiting List for Residential Supports were essentially “waiting for nothing because there was no money”. The only way residential supports would become available to an individual with I/DD would be when their last remaining caregiver (usually parent) died!

My son, Scott, was one of the lucky people who qualified for residential funding in 2014 when the Legislature reallocated funds within the DDS budget to serve people on the DDS Waiting List who had a parent over the age of 70. Scott moved into his home in Willimantic in September 2016 and he is doing very well!

In the intervening years, monies earmarked by the Legislature for DDS have led to some exciting and necessary initiatives for the Department:

- Step Up/Step Down Unit
- Enhanced Family Support Teams
- Intellectual Disabilities & Autism Spectrum Disorder Housing (IDASH) for 39 individuals
- Housing Innovation Pilot Project for 37 individuals
- Special Act No. 18-5 increasing the minimum wage for private providers (\$14.75)
- ID Partnership Advisory Committee (IDPAC) Innovative Employment Opportunity Grant
- Project SEARCH Initiative
- Emergency Transitional Housing

BUT what has happened to the DDS Residential Waiting List?

With the exception of residential supports for 76 individuals noted above, there has been no additional money directed towards reducing the Waiting List. According to the DDS Management Information Report (MIR) for September 2019, the most recently available data, there are currently 58 individuals classified as an EMERGENCY who have no residential supports or are underserved, and 718 individuals classified as URGENT meaning they have an active need and require residential services within one year. There are also 1,053 individuals who are classified as FUTURE NEEDS meaning they want and will need services in two or more years.

Where is the concern and funding for these people? These individuals and their families need help now! Many of my son's friends are still living at home with their parents, just waiting for the opportunity to start their own lives in their own homes! It is easy to forget that these are real people (and their families) on the Residential Waiting List. DDS did revive the housing initiative for families with a parent over the age of 70 this year. But realistically, can you imagine as a parent that you would have to be 70 years old before your adult child could move out of the house? Now, can you imagine how much more terrifying that situation is when your child had an intellectual disability? Please do not tell these constituents that they are not a priority again this next year!

There have been a lot of positive changes at DDS, but not nearly enough to make a difference to those on the Waiting List, especially when there is a viable solution available right now! ***With the largest rainy day fund in Connecticut history, it is time to fund the DDS Residential Waiting List!*** I support the CT Community Nonprofits Alliance's request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits. This will go a long way to reducing the DDS Residential Waiting List!

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Collette L. Bement, Ph.D.
Tolland, CT