

# Public Health Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5293

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES' RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO

**Title:** DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES STATUTES.

**Vote Date:** 3/11/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/1/2024

**File No.:** 147

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill makes various revisions to Department of Developmental Services (DDS)-related statutes:

- Codifies existing practice by establishing an Oral Health and Dental Services Unit within the DDS Health and Clinical Services Division.
- Revises a recent grant program for providers of supportive housing for people with developmental disabilities.
- Removes the statutory cap of 11 DDS self-advocate coordinators, thereby allowing DDS to hire more general workers as self-advocates.
- Updates the law on transfers from DDS-operated or -funded residential facilities
- Codifies existing practice establishing a human rights committee and program review committee within each DDS service region.
- Makes information in the DDS abuse and neglect registry available to the Office of Labor Relations.
- Names the DDS Ombudsperson office as the "Office of the Developmental Services Ombudsperson"
- Updates notice requirements related to intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Substitute language includes Legislative Commissioner's Office (LCO) technical changes.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Jordan Scheff, Commissioner, Department of Developmental Services:**

Commissioner Scheff reviewed each section of the bill and the benefits of each provision. The Commissioner noted that DDS works closely with the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA), Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Department of Housing (DOH) to ensure people with developmental disabilities can access services readily.

### **Sarah Eagan, Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate:**

Ms. Eagan testified that she remained concerned that group homes were still not reporting all incidents of abuse and neglect, and cited recommendations from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) that called for training of DDS staff and the staff of group homes regarding monitoring and reporting. OCA recommends changes in state law that strengthens the licensing framework for group homes, as well as changes that will improve DDS information sharing on incidents of abuse and neglect with the appropriate agencies. The improvements should include reporting to the legislature by DDS and DSS on needed resources to deliver safe and appropriate care to intellectually disabled citizens.

### **Seila Mosquero-Bruno, Commissioner, Department of Housing (DOH):**

Commissioner Bruno stated that with the \$5 Million in bond funds allocated to DDS, and the state and federal funds available to DOH, the intended goal of producing supportive housing for persons with intellectual disabilities can be achieved as cost effectively and efficiently as possible.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Marie Paulis, Legislative Chair, CT Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA):**

The CDHA appreciates the intent of the bill to provide dental care for developmentally disabled populations. CDHA has concerns about the quality of care and would like assurances that "provisionally licensed" does not lower the standard of care to these patients. The term "provisionally licensed" should include training that is focused on the treatment of persons with developmental disabilities.

### **Steven Lepowsky, DDS, Dean, UCONN School of Dental Medicine:**

Dr. Lepowsky believes that HB 5293 is critically important in that it will facilitate collaborative efforts to support the activities of the DDS. Dentists with provisional dental licenses will be able to provide dental care in the defined facilities. The bill represents a significant step forward in ensuring that persons with developmental disabilities have access to quality oral care.

### **Kally Moquete, Health Equity Solutions:**

Ms Moquete testified that commonly experienced challenges faced by the disability community are accessibility, ergonomically correct furniture, and the absence of assistive technology within the dental care environment. Also, caregivers often lack the education and training needed to provide safe adequate care. HB 5293 provides support for many of the families of individuals with disabilities through the provision of resources to provide the necessary training and education.

**Other Testimony in Support:**

Claire Sawyer, Tunxis Community College  
TJ Clark, CT Oral Initiative

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

There was no testimony in opposition

**Reported by: Dave Rackliffe, Asst. Clerk**

**Date: March 15, 2024**