



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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Commissioner

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TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
TO THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
March 23, 2009

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. I am Peter O'Meara, Commissioner of Developmental Services. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to **SB 1142 (Raised) An Act Concerning Relief of State Mandates on School Districts.**

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has serious concerns with Section 5 of this bill. Section 5 changes a school district's obligation to provide special education from the current "when such child is graduated from high school or reaches age twenty-one" to "when such child is graduated from high school or upon the child's twenty-first birthday." This will force students with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders out of school systems before the end of a school year. Currently in Connecticut, special education services are provided until the end of the school year and any transition to DDS adult services for eligible consumers occurs in July or thereafter.

This change would impact DDS's provision of supports and services to these individuals who have aged-out of special education services. It would require DDS to request funding from the legislature for services to begin far earlier in the year for adult employment and day services.

Another unintended result of the move to end special education services on an individual's twenty-first birthday is that families will be less likely to enroll a child in school if the child's twenty-first birthday falls in the middle of an academic year. Transitioning back into school for a final year and then having to abruptly sever this connection will put a tremendous strain, not only on these individuals with intellectual disabilities, but also on their families. It may mean an extended period for these individuals and their families when there are few services and supports available.

Beyond the fiscal impact to DDS and the disruption to individuals and families, there is the issue of preserving the continuity of educational services to persons with disabilities through the end of a school year, which is equivalent to allowing any student to remain in school until the end of

their senior year no matter when they have completed all their required course work for graduation. Students with disabilities should be able to transition out of a school setting within the same traditional, academic calendar year as any other students.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to SB 1142. Please contact Christine Pollio, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066 if you have any questions.