



March 17, 2010

Government Administration and Elections Committee

SB 424 AN ACT CONCERNING AGENCY CONSOLIDATION AND THE CREATION OF
THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CONSOLIDATION STEERING COMMITTEE.

Good morning. I am Alyssa Goduti, the Vice President for Public Policy for the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA). CCPA represents organizations that provide services and supports for adults and children with disabilities and other significant challenges including children and adults with mental illness, substance use disorders, developmental and physical disabilities. Community providers serve more than 500,000 of the state's most vulnerable residents through contracts with various human service state agencies. We are pleased to comment today on SB 424, An Act Concerning Agency Consolidation and the Creation of the Health and Human Services Consolidation Steering Committee.

We commend the Committee for your work in examining the streamlining of state government through your efforts in the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes. Similar to our comments during that process, we strongly support efforts to create efficiencies in the administration of human services presented in SB 424. We encourage the Committee to look at consolidating administrative or back office functions related to the provision of human services, while remaining cautious about the impact of any instability potentially caused by programmatic consolidations.

We also strongly recommend that any discussion of reorganizing human services also include a focus on strategies to support the health and stability of the community provider system. Community providers are the safety net of the human service delivery system. This Steering Committee could also play a vital role in working to maintain and strengthen the efficient and effective service delivery system.

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We've identified several issues for consideration related to this legislation:

1. Will the Steering Committee seek formal input from providers, legislators and other key stakeholders? The Steering Committee is made up of state agency commissioners. How will they gather input from important parties outside of their Committee?
2. Could services that overlap state agencies be streamlined and consolidated as a first step? Services that might be consolidated among the human services state agencies include:
 - Data reporting systems
 - Common RFP process
 - Contracting documents, policies, procedures, budget and personnel documents
 - Licensing protocols
 - Electronic Health Records
 - Audit compliance protocols
3. Should state agency licensing be consolidated into one state agency?
4. How would the work of this Steering Committee intersect with the work of the OPM's Purchase of Service initiatives?

We encourage the Committee to look at consolidation with a focus on administrative functions within state agencies as a way of achieving efficiencies. We ask you to look carefully at the stability of the human services system as you consider more dramatic consolidations of programmatic areas.

We also greatly appreciate the Committee including language in this bill that would extend the term of the pilot program for janitorial work for disadvantaged or disabled persons from four years to seven years. This legislation is vital to maintaining employment for hundreds of people with disabilities supported through the Preferred Purchasing Program and would help to provide additional time to pilot the new program incorporating employment opportunities for people with disabilities and those with economic disadvantages.

Since 1977 the Connecticut Legislature created a preferred purchasing program (PA 77-405; CGS 17b-656) to address low employment rates for people with disabilities. The statute

promotes employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities through government contracting. Since the original legislation, CCPA has administered the state preferred purchasing program created by this Public Act. Through the program, community providers supply state agencies with needed products and services rendered by people with disabilities. Since the original legislation, the program has produced employment, employment training, work hours and wages for people with disabilities in a variety of work settings, including janitorial services, temporary office workers, commercial laundry, landscaping, and manufacturing.

Success of the Preferred Purchasing Program last year includes:

- \$2.6 million in wages (bringing the total over the last ten years to \$23 million for workers with severe disabilities)
- Employment opportunities for 819 people with disabilities

In 2006, the Connecticut Legislature modernized this program by creating the Qualified Partnership Pilot Program (PA 06-129 CGS 4a-82). The purpose of this bill was to establish a pilot program that would promote employment for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages with commercial sector janitorial contractors and to evaluate the effectiveness of such a program for use on a larger scale as a method for addressing the employment needs of these two groups. That bill was also instrumental in resolving differences between two competing groups advocating for standard wage opportunities for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages while protecting the jobs of others through worker retention language. The language included in SB 424 would extend this important pilot to protect employment opportunities for workers with disabilities and allow for additional time to meet the pilot goals and thoroughly evaluate the pilot.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

