State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

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TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

H.B. 6278 – An Act Concerning the Department of Developmental Services
Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Services
February 9, 2011

Senators Stillman and Welch, Representatives Ritter and Perillo and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Commissioner Peter O'Meara of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for raising House Bill 6278, An Act Concerning the Department of Developmental Services Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Services.

I would first like to note that the intent of this bill is not to change anything regarding the services currently provided by the Department's Division of Autism Services. The Division, as well as the autism pilot program that statutorily ended in June 2009, have been very successful. With the current budget appropriation, the Division has four staff: one director, two case managers and one administrative assistant. Seventy-one individuals are currently receiving services. Of these individuals, six are in the planning process to develop their individual plans and service packages. Services are provided in the Greater New Haven and Greater Hartford area. There is an active advisory council to the division consisting of a legislator, parents, individuals with ASD, provider agencies, state agencies and university faculty. Provider staff receive training through DVD training films that were developed by the division in conjunction with the college of direct support and individual consultation. Three Home and Community Based Services Waivers are being developed to address the needs of children and adults currently receiving services from DDS's Autism Division, the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The Division is actively involved in the Connecticut Act Early Initiative for early identification of children with ASD, including the development of Connecticut guidelines for diagnosticians.

The bill would repeal a statute regarding the Autism pilot program which ended in 2009. The bill also makes mostly technical changes including to terminology. "Rosa's Law" is the recently passed federal law which changed the term "mental retardation" to "intellectual disability" in many instances. This change at the federal level, coupled with the proposed changes to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) by the American Psychiatric Association that are scheduled to take effect in May 2013 make changing the department's statutes to more appropriate and up-to-date terminology

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necessary. DSM-V, not only will change the term “mental retardation” to “intellectual disability”, but will change the term “autistic disorder” to “autism spectrum disorder” which will encompass all autism diagnoses on the autism spectrum. Our proposal reflects these changes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today on our agency proposal, House Bill 6278. I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have on this bill, or you may contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative Affairs at (860) 418-6066.