STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Bureau of Rehabilitative Services

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Amy Porter, Sc.D. - Director

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

February 17, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Amy Porter, Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, and I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Governor Malloy's proposed midterm budget adjustments for FY2013.

PA 11-44 created the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, bringing together the programs that were formerly known as the Department of Social Services' Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, the Workers' Rehabilitation Program and the Driver Training Program for People with Disabilities. The new Bureau creates the opportunity to better align existing resources and will improve services to Connecticut citizens with disabilities. I am honored to have been appointed by Governor Malloy in mid-January to serve as Director of the new Bureau.

Budget

The Bureau currently has a combined federal and state budget of approximately $70 million. Our services are diverse and our funding reflects this diversity. On a state level, we have funding appropriated through the General Fund, the Workers' Compensation Commission Fund and the Special Transportation Fund. On a federal level, we have funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the Social Security Administration and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. The distribution of our almost $70 million budget is about one third state and two thirds federal funds.

Personal Services

We currently have approximately 450 employees who provide an array of services, including direct services to about 15,000 individuals with disabilities, disability claims adjudication for approximately 44,000 disability claims, and sign language interpreting services to a wide range of federal, state, municipal and private entities. The Bureau's FY 2013 appropriation provides sufficient funding within the Personal Services (PS) account to fund the Bureau's programmatic infrastructure. This will allow each of our programs to continue services to support individuals with disabilities, businesses and other key stakeholders within the State of Connecticut.

Our Bureau has been fortunate to have had support from multiple agencies within the Executive Branch during this time of transition. Two of these agencies have been providing intensive

administrative support. As a previous employee of the Department of Social Services, I am grateful for the administrative support that we have received from all areas of the Department and for the commitment of Commissioner Bremby to provide the support we need to become a fully functioning, independent agency. In addition, we have programs that were formerly considered SmART agencies, receiving human resource and business office support from the Department of Administrative Services. The employees within the SmART unit have continued to support those programs and they are offering their time and assistance to help us understand the future needs of these programs and facilitating the transition.

These two agencies have helped us get to today but both are feeling the pressures of their own workloads and new responsibilities, as well as the complications of splitting the administrative support for the Bureau between two Departments.

Governor Malloy's budget proposal seeks to address this structural issue within the new Bureau. The Governor's proposed budget provides funding for the Director's position as well as seven additional positions to enable the Bureau to develop its own administrative capacity. Five of the positions are new and two are positions from the Department of Social Services that would transfer to the Bureau on July 1, 2012. Our priorities include the establishment of our own fiscal and human resources operations and the new positions will help us achieve these priorities.

Cost Allocation

We currently have a mix of cost allocation plans based on the plans in effect on June 30, 2011. We will need to create a new cost allocation plan for the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services and Governor Malloy's proposed budget includes $25,000 to support a consultant to assist us with the development of this plan. We believe that this new cost allocation plan will allow us to identify alternative funding that could be used to support the Bureau in the future.
Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Governor's recommended midterm budget. I am happy to answer any questions.