



SEIU Healthcare
United for Quality Care

New England Health Care Employees Union
77 Huyshope Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106
860.549.1199
Fax: 860.251.6049
mailbox@seiu1199ne.org
www.seiu1199ne.org

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
February 22, 2012

Re: H.B. No. 5036 (RAISED) AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF SELECTED SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY.

Testimony of Bill Meyerson, Vice-President, District 1199/SEIU Healthcare

If the current system of services for people with developmental disabilities is broken, as Raised Bill 5036 suggests, the question is who is responsible?

The underlying source of problems with current DDS services is the past 16 years of systematic dismantling of public DDS services under the Rowland and Rell administrations. This dismantling in our view is driven by two premises:

1. Cutting wages and benefits for DDS professionals and direct support workers as if people who do this work neither need or deserve a decent standard of living.
2. An ideology that believes that government is never an answer to social issues.

Unfortunately, the DDS Commissioner under the current administration has embraced these premises, taking us further along this path in a direction that limits choices for individuals and families and abdicates our common responsibility to support our friends and neighbors in need.

The members of our union in both the public and private sectors are eager to improve the quality of the services we provide. We have sought on numerous occasions to work with this Commissioner towards improving the quality of services only to be rebuffed. In fact, we have an contractual agreement with the state calls for the implementation of a Joint Labor Management Committee to "harness the creativity and experience of front-line bargaining and non-bargaining unit state employees to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state government." To date, we have received no response from this Commissioner to fulfill the agency's contractual or even good sense obligation to participate with us in a discussion of cost-savings, efficiency and effectiveness of DDS services.

Page 1 of 2 (plus attachment, 1 page)

cont. Testimony of Bill Meyerson, Vice-President, District 1199/SEIU Healthcare



To make matters worse, this Commissioner issued a memo that despite the stated intention is clearly designed to create a chilling effect on DDS employees' right to discuss their concerns with this committee and the legislature. The memo is illegal, but as importantly it exhibits a disregard for service providers and violates their right to free speech and advocacy.

Our union has a long and proud history of supporting the least restrictive environment for people with developmental disabilities as evidenced by our filing friend of the court brief in support of the lawsuit that resulted in the closing of Mansfield Training School in 1993. And we continue to support that goal for community services. But the direction represented in this bill does not improve the quality of services, but only moves people from a public to an underfunded private system with the sole purpose of avoiding a living wage and benefits. In addition, it denies hundreds of families who are currently on the waiting list for services the opportunity to get the support they need right now. Individuals with developmental disabilities and their families need a system that provides a mix of essential public and private community services--in-home, day-programs, and group homes. Individuals and families need, deserve and have a right to a choice and therefore greater control over their lives.

Once again, we urge the commissioner to join with us in a conversation and process to improve quality of services for people who need DDS services both now and into the future.



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Joseph W. Drexler, Esq.
Deputy Commissioner

Memorandum:

TO: DDS Staff via Regional Directors

FROM: Commissioner Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D. *Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D.*

DATE: February 8, 2012

SUBJECT: Communications during the Legislative Session

The 2012 Legislative Session is upon us, and I wanted to take this opportunity to remind DDS staff that it is particularly important to make sure that the Legislative Affairs Division of DDS and, in particular, Christine Pollio Cooney is aware of all communications between regional office staff and members of the General Assembly or their staff members.

This helps to ensure that I am aware of any concerns legislators may have especially when I am appearing before them at legislative committee public hearings or other formal meetings.

Please be sure to copy Christine on all requests for information that come to you directly from legislators, and please make sure that she sees all communications that you send to legislators or their staff in your capacity as a DDS employee before they are sent. Of course this does not apply to any personal communications with your legislative representatives outside of your capacity as a DDS employee. Thank you for your cooperation on this matter.