



Connecticut Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf

Founded in 1969

www.ccosd.org

Senator Gayle Slosberg and Representative Catherine Abercrombie, Co-Chairs & Human Services Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you and the Committee members about the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services Programs: I am Susan Pedersen, Past President, Connecticut Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf (CCOSD) and former board member of Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI). I am speaking for Alexandra McGee, current CCOSD President. She cannot be released from work today.

On behalf of 23 member organizations of CCOSD, I am speaking for many deaf consumers such as a deaf mother of hearing autistic kid, an elderly man seeking assistance about his retirement plan, a young deaf boy struggling with his family who rejects him due to no communication at home, and many other consumers who need assistance. I cannot name too many disappointing cases. They miss the old system that was not broken! The new concept of state agency merge – DORS doesn't work!

During the 2011 Legislative session, I spoke in favor of the proposed merger of some state agencies: the 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 under a new Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to be headed by a Commissioner. Deaf community believed that the merger would save state financial situation but now found it disappointing and different from what we were told. Now the deaf community now is not happy with poor services provided by the new DORS.

Deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind consumers nowadays are not able to receive good service from the current DORS and other state agencies. In the past the Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) staff was able to provide training on deafness and culture to the other state-agency employers who provided services. The CDHI counselors provided direct services to any clients with hearing disabilities with their abilities in sign language communication. Sign language interpreting pool was the best. Nowadays it is the opposite! **Since the merger, no program leader at the separate unit of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services under DORS is representing the deaf community on state level.**

CCOSD fought and won the legislative vote to establish the CT Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) in 1974, the first statewide service agency in the United States, and the other states copied the same kind of agency. Today I am asking for your support to improve the program for deaf and hard of hearing citizens by having a program leader. Thank you.