



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Testimony of Commissioner Donald DeFronzo
Departments of Administrative & Construction Services

165 Capitol Avenue
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Raised Bill 521
AAC Concerning a Report on the Survey of Accessibility in and to State Buildings

Aging Committee
February 5, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Raised Senate Bill 521, AAC a Report on the Survey of Accessibility in and To State Buildings.

By way of background, in December of 2011, Governor Malloy asked me to coordinate Executive Branch policy on issues related to the state's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA" or "the Act"). In this capacity, I have focused on the efforts of the Executive Branch agencies to comply with all applicable provisions of the ADA and how state agencies accommodate employees and clients with disabilities, including issues of access and communications.

I have remained cognizant of the need to avoid overlapping or impinging on the authority or responsibility of any other state agency in this area, such as the Office of Protection & Advocacy, which is responsible for assuring that individuals with disabilities are represented in legal proceedings and other public matters of concern to the community. In general, as the Statewide ADA Coordinator, I have tried to be a point of contact for discussion and communications generally within state government on these issues, and have offered to assist in resolving matters that may arise in the context of state employees or agency clients with disabilities.

Shortly after being appointed, I requested that each Executive Branch agency head appoint an ADA coordinator within the agency, and provide me with the contact information so that we could develop and maintain a statewide list and coordinate statewide activities. I also requested that the agency head provide me with information concerning his or her agency's current compliance with the Act and any information about the agency's interaction with the community of persons with disabilities.

We also began a process of outreach to the various stakeholders around the issues of concern to the community and participated in several meetings over the last year with interested groups, including the ADA Coalition of Connecticut, the state's Independent Living Centers and the Concerned Citizens for Equal Access and several smaller groups of persons with disabilities.

On December 3, 2012, we convened a training conference of the ADA coordinators for each state agency. Participants were trained on the role of the ADA coordinator and the process for accommodating persons with disabilities. The history and purpose of the Act was discussed,

along with information concerning a variety of resources available to assist persons with disabilities in accessing state facilities and programs.

At the conference, we presented a unit on the new requirements for self-evaluations and the agencies received quite a bit of information on the compliance standards. We have recently followed up with the agencies, asking that they provide information concerning the self-evaluations and any recommendations for improvements to facilities or programs.

Raised Bill 521 would require DAS, by 2014, report to this Committee on the results of a survey on accessibility in and to state buildings. I respectfully request that, instead of enacting a statutory reporting requirement this session, that the Committee allow the self-assessment process within the agencies to continue, and permit us to complete that evaluation. At such time-which we anticipate to be in or around the summer of 2013-DAS would be more than happy to provide the results to this Committee and the Legislature.

As this concept moves forward, my staff and I are happy to work with the proponents on this laudable goal. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony.