



**CT Community Providers Association**

**Caring for Connecticut**

**To: Members of the Public Health Committee**

**From: Morna Murray, President and CEO**

**Re: Public Health Committee Public Hearing on HB-5534  
An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities**

**Date: March 19, 2014**

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Morna Murray and I am the President and CEO of the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA). CCPA represents community-based organizations that provide health and human services for children, adults, and families in multiple areas, including mental health, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities. Our members serve more than 500,000 people each year.

I am writing in support of HB 5534, An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities. As you have all heard throughout this legislative session, far too many of Connecticut's individuals with disabilities are underserved, regardless of their needs or the needs of their loved ones. HB 5534 will be an important step toward ensuring that all of CT's citizens with disabilities receive the menu of services they need.

As evidenced by the Family Day hearing, CT's families caring for individuals with disabilities are incensed and alarmed at what they see as being "completely on their own" in caring for their loved ones. We must address these concerns, starting with a plan for how to provide services to our state's citizens with disabilities. However, the state currently lacks such a plan for how to get services to all of CT's individuals with disabilities. DDS no longer keeps an official waiting list, however, FOIA requests show the true waiting list for residential placements to be more than 3,000 Connecticut citizens with disabilities. Residential supports outside of family homes are reserved for emergencies only, such as when a parent dies. In-home supports are often insufficient to meet the needs of individuals and their families.

In addition to these issues on the residential side, the state is now shifting toward a model that leaves uncertain what options individuals with disabilities will have who do not have the capability to succeed after a time-limited "pre-vocational" track. While independent supported employment is the ultimate goal for all individuals with disabilities, the reality is that some may not be able to sustain this type of work. And the goal of "customized employment" - which views every individual as having a contribution to make at some level, is being implemented in other states, but not here at the present time. Moreover, these transitions take time. We cannot simply drop day supports for people for whom these may be their own link to being part of a community. CT should be working toward customized employment for every individual with a disability, according to that person's needs.

**CCPA**

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We are honored to have individuals with disabilities with us today. We look forward to the day when people with disabilities, and those without disabilities, are seen as having equal value and worth, entitled to live their lives to the fullest. CCPA stands for that principle and we stand with all our colleagues today in supporting this in every way we can. But it must be done methodically, with key stakeholders at the table at all times. And this kind of system change will require funding. That funding will be well spent, as a system is created that is person-centered and provides a menu of services so that individuals with disabilities are fully integrated into the community.

On Monday, March 17, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid issued its final regulation regarding the meaning and requirements for federal funding of community and home based services. Every state now has 5 years within which to comply with those requirements or risk losing its federal match under Medicaid.

We currently have a network of private community providers fully prepared to meet those requirements and provide a menu of supports and services for all of CT's individuals with disabilities. The question is whether the state is willing to purchase those services.

The continuing and astronomical cost of state institutions that are still operating must be addressed. The annual cost of care for an individual at Southbury, for example, is approaching a half million dollars. It must be noted that there is no way to afford serving everyone with state services remaining in place; there must be a significant shift to the private sector in order to create a long-term, sustainable system.

While HB 5534 is a critical piece of legislation to serve all of Connecticut's citizens with disabilities, we do understand that its current timeline may be challenging. We would ask the Committee to consider a date for completion that is more in keeping with the system change that must take place. We would very much like these changes to be in effect by 2016, but also understand that it may take longer. But the bottom line remains, changes must be made now and they must continue consistently until all people with disabilities have a menu of services that meets their needs.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have or provide any additional information. Please feel to contact me at (860) 257-7909 or [mmurray@ccpa-inc.org](mailto:mmurray@ccpa-inc.org).