

Testimony on the DDS budget

Submitted by Bill Knight

My name is Bill Knight, and I am submitting testimony regarding the proposed budget for the Department of Developmental Services. I am opposed to the budget that has been proposed for this department. While there might be some short term savings if this proposed budget is adopted, but it will cost more to provide resources and services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The resources and services would still need to be provided but it would happen in a less respectful and more costly environment. In my opinion, this would be a step backwards in the provision of resources and services to people who are disabled.

When Governor Malloy was sworn into office in 2009, he said that in order to address the budget deficit, it would take “shared sacrifice” in order to do so. But the Department of Developmental Services has shouldered more than its share in doing so. The budget that has been proposed makes sharp cuts in programs such as individual day supports for transitioning, and severe cuts to the voluntary services program. If these cuts are allowed to stand, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the needs of people who are intellectually and developmentally disabled to receive supports from social service organizations in their home community.

During the 2014 session of the legislature, the intellectual and developmental disabilities caucass, which is the largest caucass in the General Assembly, restored 4.4 million dollars to the DDS budget in response to the growing need of residential placements. Though this bump in the department’s budget was welcome, it’s not nearly enough to satisfy the needs of the over 2000 people who are on the waiting list for a residential placement.

It’s my understanding that the only way for someone to come off of the waiting list is in an emergency situation. While there are some who will argue that this situation exists due to a lack of money, in my view it’s more an issue of political will.

So how can the funding be found? One way in which it can be done is by closing Southbury Training School and other state institutions by the year 2020. There are organizations such as the CT Council on People with Developmental Disabilities and the CT cross-disability life span alliance are advocating for the state to do so. I agree with there position on this issue. The money derived from the sale of these

institutions could and should be used to support all of the people who are currently on the waiting list for a residential placement. The proposed budget for the Department of Developmental Services as proposed should not be approved by your committee, and I urge you to restore funding to this budget for the provision of vital programs and services.