

**Richard D. Rothstein**  
**Appropriations Committee Testimony**  
**March 6, 2015**

**Department of Disability Services**  
**2016-2017 Budget**

My name is Richard D. Rothstein and I live in West Hartford. My son, Spencer, is 32 years old, has intellectual disability, autism, a kidney transplant and a myriad of other medical issues. Spencer lives in a group home and attends a day program with HARC.

For about fifteen years, I was active with the HARC Board of Directors and served as its Chairman for four of those years. I also served as Chief Financial Officer of CIL for five years. As such, in addition to my personal experience with my son, I learned a great deal about the policies, programs and operations of the Department of Developmental Disability Services, dating back to the late 1980's.

**I advocate for full funding of the Department of Disability Services. This includes funding for all those who are eligible, but not yet receiving day, residential, respite, recreational or other services they need. I am extremely concerned about the continued underfunding of the programs of the Department of Disability Services. My concerns are for the individuals with intellectual disability who are served (or supposed to be served) by the department, and their families. My concerns also include the nonprofit providers of services and the workers who provide the services, particularly with these agencies. Most, if not nearly all, are at the breaking point. As of now, there is no plan to address the funding needs for any of these concerns.**

I ask members of the Appropriations Committee, all members of the House and Senate (including its leadership) and Governor Malloy to think about the following questions:

What are the State of Connecticut's priorities in serving those with intellectual disability and their families?

Why has the State of Connecticut made disproportionately large rescissions and budget cuts over the past several years (and this upcoming budget) to the Department of Developmental Services?

How does the State of Connecticut expect nonprofit providers to continue providing services to their existing clients with the level of draconian rescissions and budget cuts, including those in the current budget and the upcoming budget biennium?

Why have the most efficient providers of services to those with intellectual disabilities, the nonprofit agencies, not received an increase in their rates in nearly ten years – and their increases over the last twenty five years have been far less than any measure of cost-of-living? (while their costs have increased dramatically)

Why is it that State of Connecticut direct care workers in the Department of Developmental Services continue to receive far superior wages (including raises) and benefits to the workers doing the same work (and in the same union) for the nonprofit providers (an issue that dates back at least to the 1980's)?

Why is there no plan to serve those on the waiting list for residential services, which has been allowed to grow considerably – now more than 2,000 individuals, with intellectual disability? How long must they continue to wait (some with Priority 1 status have waited a decade or more)?

Consider the hypothetical; what if your family faced the challenges that the individuals and families who are appearing before you today faced. What if you were told that the wait for needed services was at sometime in the future, after your death, without being able to participate in the planning and aid in the transition?

Governor Malloy has appointed two individuals; Terry Edelstein as Nonprofit Liaison and Jonathan Slifka as Disabilities Liaison. They are both first with that responsibility in Connecticut. Governor Malloy has also appointed an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Working Group, which has not yet issued a report. The legislature has shown leadership in the formation of the first Intellectual Disability Caucus in the country, which now has more than 60 members. Despite these admirable efforts, in the last four years, with rare exception, resources to the Department of Developmental Services have been cut while the overall state budget has grown.

I am optimistic that Commissioner Morna Murray, the newly appointed commissioner, will do her very best to serve the intellectual disability community. Commissioner Murray will need new resources in order to fulfill the mission of the department. Advocates are prepared to work with her to find efficiencies and creative ways to help achieve the needs of these individuals and families.

**It is time to address the needs with the resources to get the job done. So, I say once again; provide the Department of Development Services with the full funding that it needs in order to meet the needs of those who rely upon it for their programs. This includes restoration of the rescissions and budget cuts in 2014-2015 and the upcoming biennial budget proposed by Governor Malloy. Let's return to a long lost leadership position in serving the needs of those with intellectual disability and their families.**

**Ladies and gentlemen of the Appropriations Committee, please remember; Individuals and families facing the challenges of intellectual disability, and the workers who serve them, are people too, are residents of your districts, and #people matter.**

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Richard D. Rothstein