



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Morna A. Murray, J.D.
Commissioner

Remarks to the Joint Committee on Executive and Legislative Nominations
By Morna A. Murray, J.D. – February 24, 2015

Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor and distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I am Morna A. Murray, J.D., nominee for the Commissioner of Developmental Services. I am honored to have been asked by Governor Dannel P. Malloy to lead the department and serve the citizens of Connecticut as Commissioner and I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss my qualifications and answer any questions that you may have for me.

Since 2013, I have had the pleasure of serving as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA), a premier trade association for community-based health and human service providers. CCPA is a strong, effective resource for community providers that provide services to individuals with significant challenges, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health disorders, and substance use disorders.

I am an attorney and have had extensive experience in state and federal public policy, particularly as it pertains to vulnerable populations. I previously served as Senior Counsel to Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr (D-PA); Vice President of First Focus, a national children's policy organization in Washington, D.C.; and Director of Youth Development for the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, D.C. I have been a leading advocate for children, adults, and families in the areas of developmental disabilities, health care, behavioral health, and child and family well-being. I am a member of the Connecticut, Washington, D.C. and Florida Bar Associations. I live in Glastonbury and have two adult children.

Forming partnerships and achieving buy-in from stakeholders will be a key to success in the important work before me as the Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). My career has focused on public policy and advocacy for those who often have no voice in the political system. This work has made me understand that to a large extent, the complexities and nuances of achieving effective solutions are enormous. For an agency that serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, this is a particular challenge. We need to weigh serious fiscal constraints with equally serious human needs. It is exceedingly difficult, though not impossible, to find common ground between fiscal reality and human needs, and that is my commitment. For far too long, persons with disabilities and their loved ones have been marginalized by our society. In my opinion, it is one of the most important civil rights issues of our time.

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It has often been said that the best solution to a highly complex situation is likely when no stakeholder is completely happy, but all can eventually agree. While I certainly do not aspire to leading changes with which there is dissatisfaction, I commit to a process that achieves progress while not getting bogged down waiting for illusive consensus. I plan to do this by having an open door to all viewpoints, and leading an open, civil and collaborative process. Solutions that are driven to consensus through the lowest common denominator are not genuine solutions in my opinion. This is the fine line that I am committed to walking and I welcome the opportunity to hear from anyone with a genuine interest in making our system more effective, efficient and responsive.

I appreciate the opportunity to lead DDS. This is a critical position at a critical time, and I hold this trust with the utmost humility and determination to find effective solutions to the complex challenges the Department faces. I look forward to working and collaborating with all staff and stakeholders – particularly individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their loved ones, and all those who serve them — in doing the hard and painstaking work that leads to progress. Together, we can make Connecticut a state in which individuals with disabilities enjoy lives of productivity, inclusion and dignity.

I want to publicly state that the staff at DDS (and I have known many of them in my previous position and also spent a lot of time getting to know them over the last few weeks) are extraordinarily mission-driven. Many DDS staff have spent decades providing quality services to individuals with intellectual disability and doing everything they can to solve problems and provide these individuals with much-deserved opportunities. I commend these staff, they have my utmost respect, and I am honored to work with them.

I also have firsthand knowledge of the many private providers and their staff who dedicate their lives every day to supporting persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I want to convey my thanks to these providers and their staff members for all they do and the exceptional care that they provide.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to working with all of you and I welcome any questions you have for me at this time.