



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 7, 2016

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
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**House Bill 5541 - AN ACT CONCERNING INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESSES THAT EXCEED
ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

House Bill 5541 will mandate the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish a pilot program that will provide for incentives for privately owned businesses in the state to upgrade their facilities with equipment that exceeds the accessibility standards of the American Disabilities Act. The bill also mandates the Commissioner of Public Health to develop the criteria for the pilot program. In addition, the Commissioner would be required to submit a report to the Public Health Committee that includes the number of businesses that are participating in the pilot program, the incentives provided to such businesses for upgrades to their facilities, the types of upgrades performed by such businesses and any recommendations to expand the pilot program.

The Department cannot accomplish these additional mandates within available resources. DPH does not have the resources to support financial incentives to businesses, nor expertise in this area. While the proposed bill does not provide guidance regarding the types of incentives the Department is required to provide to a business, typically they could include tax credits or low interest loans which do not fall within DPH's purview. In addition, the Department is not the lead state agency on accessibility for people with disabilities. The Department of Rehabilitation Services, while not charged with broad oversight of accessibility in the workplace has programs, policies and practices that are designed to promote employment, independence, equal access and self-sufficiency for people with disabilities.

In conclusion, the requirements of this bill are not within the core services of the Department of Public Health. And, as Governor Malloy stated in his 2016 State of the State Address, we must reset our expectations of what we can afford in light of the new economic reality facing Connecticut. Because an unbudgeted fiscal impact would result for DPH or another state agency to establish the pilot program regarding accessibility standards, the Department cannot support this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's view of this proposal.

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