

Testimony of Shelagh McClure, Chair  
Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Before the Appropriations Committee

On Senate Bill 9

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**Submitted to: [APPtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:APPtestimony@cga.ct.gov)**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to **Senate Bill 9**, a proposal entitled **AAC Transparency in Public Spending**.

I am Chair of the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities, a public agency whose mission is to promote independence and full inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in their communities, and to foster capacity building and system change. I am also the parent of a 25-year old son with an intellectual disability who lives at home with my husband and me.

To understand the Council's opposition to SB 9 it is necessary to set out the entire budgetary reform scheme that the Governor has proposed. SB 9 bill is the companion bill to House Bill 5044, which presents the Governor's proposed "block grant" approach to budgeting.

Currently, the state uses a line item approach to budgeting, where the Governor proposes to spend public dollars for specified purposes—such as, in the case of the Department of Developmental Services, for Day and Employment Services or for Respite Services. Through the public hearing process at the legislature, members of the public are provided the opportunity to express their views on the purposes and priorities as set forth in the proposed line items. The legislature then adopts a budget, with line items that contain final dollar amounts, that may or may not match the Governor's original proposal.

HB 5044 would do away with the line item approach and substitute it with a block grant—essentially a bottom line dollar amount—leaving the Governor and agency head total flexibility on how such dollars are expended, so long as it is for statutorily appropriate purposes.

SB 9 has been proposed by the Governor as a nod to “transparency”—an acknowledgement by the Executive Branch that the public has a right to know how it has spent the appropriated dollars, but in SB 9, that would occur only after they have been spent, when the opportunity to affect priorities has passed. And the standards for “transparency” will be established by OPM and the agency head for their own agency’s data.

The Council submitted testimony in opposition to HB 5044 because it cuts the public and the legislature out of the process of setting spending priorities and violates core principles of representative government. We oppose SB 9 because it is a further piece of this ill-conceived budget plan, and utterly lacks transparency. By its terms, it suggests that there may be spending and performance data that is not publicly available—contrary to the Freedom of Information Act. It provides that the agency shall set its own spending priorities and outcome measures, not subject to legislative review, public input or a regulation making process.

Democracy may be messy at times, and whether out of frustration or a desire for expediency, the Governor’s budget reform proposal places great confidence and responsibility in his executive appointments and agency employees, to the exclusion of the legislative branch and the general public. This confidence in bureaucrats, however well-meaning they may be, is misplaced and undemocratic.

The Council resoundingly places itself on the side of democracy and in favor of retaining public and legislative participation. The committee should, swiftly and emphatically, give this bill an unfavorable report.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.