



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services

**DDS**

Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

Morna A. Murray, J.D.  
Commissioner

Jordan A. Scheff  
Deputy Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY  
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**February 24, 2016**

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Morna Murray, Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of **S.B. No. 132 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES' RECOMMENDATION ON INVOLUNTARY FACILITY ADMISSIONS.**

Thank you for raising this agency bill that changes outdated statutory language “adult incompetent” to more appropriate, person-first language and terminology in line with what is used by the probate courts. The proposed revision changes the term to “an adult for whom a guardian or involuntary conservator has been appointed.”

DDS has taken many steps over the past several years to replace outdated, often unintentionally disrespectful terminology with more appropriate, person-centered and person-first language and this technical agency bill furthers this goal. DDS has encouraged the use of respectful language through several avenues including changing the name of the department, statutory language changes and an official DDS respectful language policy which states that DDS is committed to promoting the respect and dignity of individuals who receive services from the department or its providers. The policy concerns the use of respectful and “person first” language when referring to individuals with disabilities by department employees and all persons licensed, funded or contracted by the Department of Developmental Services.

As standards of acceptable speech have evolved, individuals who receive supports and services from DDS and its provider network have found the use of disrespectful and “non-person first” language to be offensive and a barrier to full integration into the community. DDS encourages its providers to use respectful language when referring to individuals receiving supports and services from the department. DDS staff is expected to use respectful and “person first” language at all times. **S.B. No. 132** furthers this goal of promoting respectful and person-first language when referring to individuals who are supported by DDS.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of our agency bill **S.B. No. 132**. You may contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066 with any questions.

Phone: 860 418-6000 ♦ TDD 860 418-6079 ♦ Fax: 860 418-6001  
460 Capitol Avenue ♦ Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
[www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) ♦ e-mail: [ddsct.co@ct.gov](mailto:ddsct.co@ct.gov)  
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