



# State of Connecticut

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## Testimony

Sen. Len Fasano

Public Health Committee

March 7, 2017

**S.B. 244** AN ACT CONCERNING IMPROVING SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
**S.B. 246** AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE-WIDE WAITING LIST FOR RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, Representative Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of ***SB 244 An Act Concerning Improving Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities*** and ***SB 246 An Act Concerning a State-Wide Waiting List for residential Placement for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities***.

Last year many of us worked in a bipartisan manner with families of the developmentally disabled to pass legislation improving communication and transparency at the Department of Developmental Services. Public Act 16-60 requires DDS to provide families with critical information regarding their requests for services, the Department's decision making on those requests, their level of needs assessment and priority status, and the services available to them through the Regional Advisory Councils. It also requires the Department to report annually to this committee regarding the number of individuals waiting for services and their unmet needs.

There was also an informal agreement that DDS would meet during the interim with families to develop a consistent mechanism for families to be informed of their placement on the waiting list, their priority status and how to request a change in that status. This process has been underway, and I appreciate the Department's involvement and participation.

At the same time, there were a number of issues of concern to families that did not make it into Public Act 16-60. In addition, changing leadership and the potential of a changing administration make it imperative that the informal agreement and commitment from the Department to engage in collaboration with families is codified in some way.

SB 244 and SB 246 seek to address these outstanding concerns. I would note that SB 244 contains the more detailed description of what is requested and would ask that this language be drafted into SB 246, which many legislators have sponsored to show their support for the families.

I would further request that SB 244 then be used as a vehicle to codify the ID Partnership. Language implementing an ID Partnership was included in the administration's bill SB 17 last year. This language did not make it into the final budget implementers. However, the Department has moved forward with the ID Partnership informally.

Given that the ID Partnership is the body through which the Department seeks to “increase access to quality services for persons with intellectual disabilities” and develop wide ranging policy regarding funding priorities and program administration, it is imperative that this “Partnership” include broad representation from all families served by DDS and other stakeholders. It is also important that it operate in a transparent and accountable manner with notice of meetings, minutes, opportunity for public input, etc.

Therefore, I ask the committee to draft language codifying the ID Partnership, including its membership, meeting schedule, public notice and input requirements, etc. into SB 244.

A core function of state government is to protect and serve its most vulnerable citizens. Unfortunately, Connecticut still struggles to meet the needs of the developmentally disabled. I want to thank DDS Families First and The ARC for their tireless advocacy on behalf of the developmentally disabled. Because of their efforts, we have made progress, yet much work remains. I believe that SB 244 and SB 246 can continue the progress we made last year to improve services and increase the level of communication, transparency and accountability for the Department and its delivery of those services.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to working with you on these bills as they move forward.

Len Fasano  
Senate Republican President Pro Tempore