Senator Osten, Representative Walker, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on **Gov. Bill No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

I am Vice 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 28-year old son with Down Syndrome who lives at home with my husband and me.

I am submitting testimony in support of the Governor’s proposed budget for the **Department of Developmental Services (DDS)**. I support this budget because I believe it does a good job of fulfilling the Department’s mission—far better than recent budgets. It makes a good faith effort to provide services broadly to the population is supposed to serve, and to support initiatives that promote community-based living. I wish to highlight a few items.

This year, for the first time is many years, we have a budget that proposes to fully fund the Day and Employment Program for all high school graduates with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). This is not only welcome, it should become the norm.

Our young people work hard to graduate from high school, and they should not have to wonder whether their hard work will be devalued by a system that does not continue to invest in their
future. Nor should their parents have to spend sleepless nights, wondering whether they will have to leave a job or pay for home care, because the State is not a reliable partner. Yet, in past years, this has been the pattern—and it is terribly unfair. This year can be different—I urge you to support the Governor’s proposal to fully fund the Day and Employment Program within DDS.

The Governor has also proposed funding for initiatives that address crisis intervention and rapid response. This is an area that has needed attention for some time—dealing with the population of individuals with both I/DD and behavioral diagnoses who have been utilizing the emergency room, rather than receiving therapeutic services in appropriate settings. By funding step up/step down beds for individuals in crisis, operating respite services 7 days a week that focus on crisis intervention in community based settings, and funding specialists in behavioral supports and other services, this budget is addressing an urgent need. I hope you will support these requests which provide critically needed services for our most vulnerable citizens.

The budget also has a number of initiatives that promote community-based living for people with I/DD. The Council, which supports the closure of segregated State-run institutions for people with I/DD, is very pleased with the Governor’s support of the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, which provides support for individuals transitioning from institutions such as Southbury Training School, as well as from nursing homes, to community-based settings. Under MFP, the State gets an enhanced Medicaid match, and in the bargain, individuals move to a more cost effective, community-based setting. We urge the Committee’s support for all of the Governor’s MFP requests.

In addition, the Governor has proposed to fund 70 new supportive housing units for individuals with I/DD and autism spectrum disorder. In these units, individuals will live in their own apartments in the community with wrap around services, including in-home supports, rental assistance and case
management. This is an excellent example of cost efficient, inclusive, community-based living that we hope will gain greater support in the coming years, and we ask for the Committee’s full support of this request.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of the proposed DDS budget. I know that you have a daunting task ahead, due to the looming deficit, and that today, you are not dealing with the revenue side. However, when you are faced with the inevitable tough questions, I hope you think about the reasons you are elected, and what the core functions of government are. The individuals served by DDS are not people who have the wherewithal to withstand the loss of services and supports if the budget is cut. They are the people government is here, most critically, to serve and support. Please keep that in mind as you move forward in the budget process.