



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES**  
*A Healthcare Service Agency*

**NED LAMONT**  
GOVERNOR

**MIRIAM DELPHIN-RITTMON, PH.D.**  
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony of Miriam Delphin-Rittmon**  
**Commissioner**  
**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**

Good Morning Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. I am Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 6637 AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR DEAF, DEAF-BLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS.

DMHAS provides person-centered and recovery-oriented services that are culturally and linguistically affirmative to adult individuals age eighteen (18) or older who are Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing who are experiencing episodes of mental illness and/or substance use disorders. The Department also offers interpreting services to clients' representatives and any individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing who are attending or participating in DMHAS-sponsored activities/or training. By statute, DMHAS does not provide services for individuals who are under the age of 18.

The DMHAS state-operated (inpatient/outpatient) facilities offer statewide services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHOH) adults with behavioral health disorders. These services include access to clinicians and DHOH interpreters who coordinate services and provide treatment for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing. In several of the DMHAS facilities, DHOH interpreters are individuals with lived experience with behavioral health disorders. Currently the DMHAS DHOH program has 11 staff members serving 135 individuals identifying as deaf and hard of hearing.

Section 2 of this bill describes a patient bill of rights for individuals who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing and receiving mental health services. The Department is happy to review current statute related to patient rights to ensure the statute is inclusive of adults who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing and receiving DMHAS services.

Section 3 of this bill develops a structure for the delivery of services to deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing individuals. DMHAS is concerned that the centralized structure outlined in this bill would negatively impact the person-centered, localized services that are currently delivered by agency treatment teams of behavioral health experts in an effective, cost-efficient manner. In addition, DMHAS does not have the resources to implement the expansive structure outlined in this section.

While DMHAS does not have the available resources to develop and staff an advisory committee for the state-wide mental health program for deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing persons as described in Section 4 of the bill, the agency is happy to continue to address these issues via continued participation on the Advisory Board for Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. Please feel free to direct any question you may have regarding this testimony to Mary Kate Mason, DMHAS Director of Government Affairs at [mary.mason@ct.gov](mailto:mary.mason@ct.gov).