

Questions for Aging and Disability Services Commissioner Nominee

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Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services (CGS § 17b-650a)

The commissioner manages the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), which is responsible for providing (1) services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; (2) services for persons who are blind or have visual impairments; (3) rehabilitation services, including workers' compensation claimants; and (4) services for older persons and their families.

Questions for Nominee

1. The department recently was awarded \$13.9 million in federal funding related to employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Specifically, the grant is meant to decrease use of subminimum wages and increase access to competitive employment. What is the timeline for this project? How are employers and other relevant state agencies (e.g., the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)) participating in the planning for it? Is there still a role for subminimum wages as a policy option to encourage employment for people with disabilities or is this policy outdated?
2. You led this department through a transition as it expanded to include responsibility for services to aging populations. What challenges and opportunities have you encountered over this period?
3. The department, in collaboration with the Department of Transportation (DOT), is conducting a pilot to provide visual interpreting services free of charge when using public transportation. The service uses a smartphone user's camera to stream live video to an agent who narrates and interprets what they see, giving users instant access to visual information about their surroundings. This pilot program recently expanded to include Bradley Airport. A report on

the pilot is expected in March 2023. Can you describe any preliminary findings? Will ADS and DOT be equally involved in evaluating this pilot? If implemented as a permanent program, how will funding be sustained?

4. Other state agencies have responsibility over certain services for aging populations and people with disabilities, including DDS and the Department of Social Services (DSS). Describe your working relationship with the agencies. Are agency responsibilities in serving these populations clearly defined? Do people seeking services know where to go?
5. Legislation passed last year created a Community Ombudsman program within the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman to investigate and resolve complaints about homecare services ([PA 22-146](#), §§ 7 & 29). Can you provide an update on the status of this program?
6. In recent years, deaf and hard of hearing people have reported problems accessing interpreters in medical settings such as hospitals. Legislation passed last year expanded the types of acceptable certifications for medical interpreting ([PA 22-31](#)). Has there been any noticeable improvement? How would you describe the current level of access?
7. People who are elderly or living with a disability are often at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19. How do you see the lingering effects of the pandemic in your work and what challenges do you foresee as other Connecticut residents, businesses, and organizations resume normal life?
8. What are your priorities for the 2023 session? How have they changed since last year?

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