
News

The **Connecticut General Assembly** convened on February 5, 2014, for a short session that has given attention to individuals who live with intellectual disabilities.

Due to the efforts of families and The Arc Connecticut, a bipartisan coalition of state legislators formed an **Intellectual & Developmental Disability Caucus** that is chaired by Senator Beth Bye – the first such state-level caucus in the nation. The Caucus held an informational forum in February where families shared their concerns. A video recording of the forum is archived at

<http://ct-n.com/webstream.asp?odID=9902&odTitle=Family+Hearing+Day%3A+Families+of+Individuals+with+Developmental+Disabilities+Informational+Forum&caption=true>.

The Caucus has met several times since to hear more testimony and discuss ways to assist our families. For more information about the Caucus contact Leslie Simoes at http://thearcct.org/catalog/contact_us.php

The **Appropriations Committee**, which is co-chaired by Senator Beth Bye, challenged the Governor's budget request for the Department of Developmental Services and asked DDS to estimate the costs of residential services for individuals on the DDS Emergency Waiting list. The Committee then proposed an **additional \$4,439,000 for residential placements** of individuals currently living with caretakers who are 70 years of age or older and an additional \$750,000 for families caring for their loved ones at home. In her remarks to the committee, Senator Bye said, "The adjustments that were made are adjustments that take care of the people of Connecticut, people that need our care, people with developmental disabilities." At this time these adjustments await the final budget negotiations and votes in the General Assembly.

The Public Health Committee raised H.B. 5534 5534, **AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**, which would require the Commissioner of DDS to provide services to all eligible individuals. A video archive of the public hearing on this bill is at

<http://ct-n.com/webstream.asp?odID=10054&odTitle=Public+Health+Committee+Public+Hearing+on+Behavioral+Health%2C+Autism%2C+DDS+Services%2C+and+Hospital+Conversion+Bills&caption=true>

At this time it appears that this bill will be amended to require a report on a plan to serve all eligible individuals.

The Housing Committee raised S. B. 364, **AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISIONS TO THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING INITIATIVE STATUTE**, which would include the Department of Developmental Disabilities in the permanent supportive housing initiatives that are funded by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority under Sec. 17a-485c of the state statutes. At this time it appears that this bill will become law and may enable some creative housing solutions in the future.

The General Assembly will adjourn on May 7.

Families have been speaking up at the **Governor's Community Forums!** Watch this Youtube video, <http://youtu.be/NNd1bm5USvw>, where the Governor responds to Joanne Oullette about housing for her son George and other families on the DDS wait lists.

Events

April 16 - The Arc Connecticut Families for Families Lobby Day. 10:30am-1:00pm at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Bring Your Loved Ones to the Capitol!

April 16, 23, and 30 - SEIU Our Families Can't Wait Lobby Days at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford.

For more information about upcoming events, check our groups on Yahoo or Facebook – or send an email to family-empowerment@comcast.net

Join us on the Internet

Website: <http://family-empowerment.weebly.com>

Facebook: CT DDS Family Empowerment Task Force

Yahoo: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/family-empowerment/>

Email: family-empowerment@comcast.net

Support the FETF

You may support the FETF with a donation to our fiscal agent, Raising Voices for Action, Inc. Make your check payable to Raising Voices for Action, Inc. and please note on the check that it is for the FETF. Mail your donations to the FETF, 17 C Woodland Street, Vernon, CT 06066.

About the FETF

The Family Empowerment Task Force (FETF) is an informal, unincorporated, organization of parents, siblings, guardians, caregivers and self-advocates that works to sustain, enhance and grow the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) that are offered by DDS through its private provider network by: 1) Developing a supportive network of families and individuals who receive services; 2) Educating families about DDS services; and 3) Educating legislators and public officials about the needs of families.