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Testimony of the  
Office of Aging and Disability Services  
Department of Health and Human Services

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human

Neither For Nor Against LD 962  
An Act To Appropriate Funds to Eliminate Waiting Lists for Home and Community-based  
Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury and Other Related  
Conditions

Sponsored by: Representative Millett  
Hearing Date: April 21, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Paul Saucier, Director of the Office of Aging and Disability Services in the Department of Health and Human Services. I am here today to speak neither for nor against LD 962, An Act to Appropriate Funds to Eliminate Waiting Lists for Home and Community-based Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury and Other Related Conditions. I would like to offer the following information for your consideration.

As before, when LD 1984 was proposed in the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature, the Department supports the intent of this bill, which is to provide needed supports and services for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism to live and work as independently as possible in their communities. The Governor has included funding in her biennial budget proposal to support 30 additional individuals per month in the Section 29 waiver program, for a total of 720 additional individuals over the biennium. The Department continues to reserve places in the Section 21 waiver program for Priority 1 individuals, who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. In Sections 18 and 20, where capacity of the service delivery system is lacking, the Department recently introduced a self-directed option under Appendix K to allow participants to identify and direct their own personal care attendants. In addition, the Governor's biennial budget proposal includes significant rate increases for Section 21 and Section 29 providers to help recruit and retain workers.

This bill requires that specific appropriations are made to fully fund all estimated current and future waiver funding needs for the Department's Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver programs over the biennium. Realistically, the Department does not believe the service system can expand this rapidly, nor would it serve individuals well to do so without adding more support options. Last year, the Department launched an Innovation Work Group with stakeholders to identify new support models that would give individuals more choice in the type of supports they receive and promote greater integration in the community. The Department believes that the Governor's budget initiative expands access at an achievable growth rate during the biennium while additional support options are identified and developed with the support of individuals, families, advocates and providers.

This bill would have a major fiscal impact, and details are provided in our fiscal estimate. The primary cost would be for the provision of services. In addition to building provider capacity to handle the influx of individuals quickly, the Department would need additional staff resources to handle waiver funding approvals, administrative and regional oversight and training of new providers to assure quality of the services. These additional positions have been incorporated into the fiscal estimate for this bill.

Individuals will only benefit from the elimination of wait lists if it is done sustainably and at an acceptable level of quality. The Department has launched a reform process with stakeholders to promote innovation and expand choices for people, and has proposed new Section 29 waiver opportunities to ensure access over the biennium.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and to make myself available for questions at the work session.