



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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Commissioner

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**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
TO THE
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**H.B. No. 6542- An Act Concerning the Preservation of Farmland at the
Southbury Training School**

March 15, 2013

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and members of the Environment Committee. I am Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D., Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **House Bill 6542, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF FARMLAND AT THE SOUTHBURY TRAINING SCHOOL.**

DDS's Southbury Training School (STS) is situated on over 1400 acres in Southbury. Approximately 370 individuals reside in small cottages and apartments on the campus. The campus includes a 331 acre farm, which currently is leased by DDS to a local dairy farmer. The five year lease agreement is in its final year and there is an option for renewal for an additional five years. All lease payments, which total approximately \$6,600 annually, are returned to the general fund.

DDS appreciates the work that the Department of Agriculture has done regarding this legislation. Commissioner Reviczky and I have had numerous conversations regarding the preservation of agricultural lands on the STS campus, which is such a valuable asset for the state.

While there is no plan to close STS in a set number of years, provisions of the Settlement Agreement in the case of *Messier v. Southbury Training School* continue to guide the process by which class members/STS residents and their families and guardians explore and consider community placement. The professional teams at Southbury Training School (STS) have been making a recommendation regarding community placement during each Individual Plan meeting since November of 2011. During 2012, 24 individuals moved out of STS and are receiving community based supports. There are 30 more individuals at STS who are currently having

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community services developed for them. The professional team reassesses each person at least annually regarding the recommendation for community services and presents or revisits this recommendation with the guardian. As the census at STS continues to decrease, DDS is consolidates resources by moving individuals to residential buildings on the main area of the STS campus.

This legislation will allow DDS to focus solely on the mission of the department related to individuals in our service system instead of having to focus limited resources on administering agricultural land, which is clearly an issue better suited for the Department of Agriculture. While limited, DDS still has a need for the use of, and access to, a few buildings on the property referred to in this legislation, including but not limited to residences, a respite center, and the chicken farm. We are confident that a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Agriculture will address our need to preserve access to these buildings for the immediate future and as long as necessary.

I would like to thank Governor Malloy and Commissioner Reviczky for their work on this legislation. The provisions of the bill will both protect the goal of preservation and allow DDS continued use of the necessary land and buildings, which are a valuable resource for persons with intellectual disability.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 6542. If you have any questions or need any additional information from DDS, please contact Christine Pollio Cooney, Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066.