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**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
TO THE
TASK FORCE TO STUDY CONVERTING LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENTS
FROM PAPER TO ELECTRONIC FORM
November 18, 2010**

Senator Crisco, Committee Administrator Henry and members of the Task Force to Study Converting Legislative Documents from Paper to Electronic Form. I am Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison, for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify concerning proposed changes in the delivery of legislative information to the public. We wish to thank you for taking up this daunting task of transforming a culture that has thrived on the use of paper for decades.

The department applauds your efforts to move boldly into a future of web-based and on-line information which may save money for the state while preserving our natural resources. Certainly with more electronic access comes the hope that more citizens, including citizens with disabilities, will take advantage of this method to find information and data and use it to understand the issues that confront state government. More access for the public should result in better informed citizens.

However, the Department of Developmental Services wishes to caution the Task Force on its move towards having only electronic documents. From the perspective of the consumers who the department serves and their families, electronic media does not always provide easy access to public information. Not everyone has access to personal computers, MP3 players and other assorted and updated electronic devices. For some populations, paper is the medium that is the best, cheapest and most efficient in which to communicate. The General Assembly, along with the Executive and Judicial Branches, has a responsibility to all Connecticut citizens to make access to public information simple and efficient, in whatever media is best suited to an individual's needs, so that those citizen's can choose to participate in state government.

Our department, which serves approximately 20,000 consumers and their families, has more than 4,000 employees and contracts with more than 175 providers, works closely with the legislature on a range of issues. The department's legislative team must communicate the impact of legislative decision-making with all these stake-holders. To help us communicate more efficiently while reducing the need for printed documents, we recommend that all state agencies be able to access what is now the internal CGA bill tracking system. This internal tracking system, which is available only to legislators and legislative employees, provides much clearer information and has the ability for users to make notes and comments within the document. This tracking document also can be sent to users on a daily or on an as-updated basis. Access to this comprehensive tracking document would reduce the need for agencies to set up their own imperfect tracking systems that rely on e-

mails alerts from the external CGA tracking system. It would reduce the need for paper copies because the links to bills and associated documents are built into the internal CGA tracking document.

We also strongly recommend the continuation of official transcripts for all legislative public hearings. Although we understand that transcription is a costly process, the ability of an agency to refer to written transcripts of public comments for purposes of legislative intent and clarity is essential. Technology has not advanced to the point where a public statement in an audio recording can be searched for in the same way it can be found quickly in a written transcript.

Another recommendation for savings is to have all agency testimony be submitted to all legislative committees electronically and have the committee administrator or clerk determine how many copies are needed to be printed. Electronic submission of testimony by agencies would also eliminate the need for committee staff to scan paper documents to put them on-line.

Finally, the department recommends that in advancing towards a paperless future that the needs of those individuals, who do not have access to technology or do not have the skills that make accessing public information easy, be considered and that accommodation be made for all levels of ability. This does not mean that changes in the way the public gets legislative information should not go forward, but that paper copies of public information that is available electronically also should be made readily available either through limited numbers of paper copies or with a system of printing documents upon request.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns. Please contact me at (860) 418-6130 or Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066, if you have any questions.