

Testimony
House Bill 1039 – Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
Representative Weisz, Chairman
January 15, 2013

Chairman Weisz, members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Tina Bay, Director of the Developmental Disabilities Division, for the Department of Human Services (Department). I am here today to discuss House Bill 1039.

House Bill 1039 instructs the Department to implement a voucher system for up to 100 individuals up to age 26 and up to 50 individuals aged 26 and older with autism spectrum disorders.

If this bill is adopted, the Department will need clarification on a number of items in order to ensure that we honor legislative intent and implement a successful program.

A voucher program is a program where, once eligible for the program, a person receives “vouchers” to “purchase” services.

The Department would need staff resources to run a voucher program, which would include establishing the mechanisms of the voucher program, developing prior authorization criteria, and monitoring the services received and payments made. The program would need management and monitoring of the infrastructure, service agreements, and utilization. We would expect that the legislature would want the Department to reconcile vouchers issued with vouchers used and attend to the issues that arise in the development and implementation of the program and services.

Some questions for which answers would be helpful so the Department understands legislative intent include:

Who decides that the services a family requests are approved?

Who would determine which services are allowable and unallowable?

Who are the appropriately trained individuals to make these decisions?

Is the voucher funding intended to be used last if an eligible person had other resources or assistance available such as eligibility for Medicaid or other insurance?

Who would be qualified to provide the services?

Who decides if a requested service is tied to the autism diagnosis or another medical condition?

As some of the services mentioned do not exist, is it the intent that the Department establish the parameters of the provider qualifications and reimbursement levels?

Is the intent that the Department makes the final decision on these items?

Would providers be required to enter a vendor agreement in order to become an approved vendor?

In Section 1, Number 4, House Bill 1039 lists a wide variety of services ranging from medical care to housing, to transportation. The Department requests clear criteria on what the vouchers would cover to avoid the Department being more lenient or more prescriptive than intended. Due to the potential magnitude of the program, the development of administrative rules would likely be necessary.

In Section 2, the appropriation states that up to \$30,000 per year per person is available for a total of \$4,500,000 for the biennium. The Department would like clarification on the appropriation. According to the information proposed in the bill: \$30,000 per person X 2 (years) X 150

individuals = \$9,000,000. The \$4,500,000 would be appropriate if the intent is that it would take 12 months to develop a voucher program; therefore only one year of vouchers would be issued. If this is the case, the Department recommends a delayed effective date be added to the bill.

We pose these questions so you may consider them in your discussions on this bill because the Department wants to follow the intent and be able to fulfill the scope of intended outcomes of this program.

I am available to answer any questions.