



Joint Hearing on Proposed Agency Consolidation in Philadelphia

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Testimony of:

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Dear Pennsylvania Representatives, Senators, and friends,

Thank you for allowing me this chance to testify to you on behalf of consumers and providers in Pennsylvania's Home and Community Based (HCBS) programs, who have disabilities and are under the age of 60. As a Provider of Adult Day services at Inglis, I foresee the state's proposed unification could have valuable outcomes assuming proper attention and preparations are deployed.

People under the age of 60, utilizing HCBS face several challenges in the Commonwealth's current system. Access, utilization, and movement between providers are challenges that need to be considered as the state prepares for unification of the Departments of Health, Aging, Drug and Alcohol, and Human Services.

Aligning Policy and Regulation/ Reducing duplication in licensure/improving communication and collaboration among Departments:

Alignment is needed for the consumers as much as it is needed for the providers. The greatest benefit that can come from a unification of Departments, is the alignment of policy and elimination of duplicated oversight and auditing. Today's consumers in the community interact and receive support from several providers to successfully achieve the goals they set in their Care Plan.

- For example, Connie is a young woman who lives alone in our Philadelphia community. Her basic activities of daily living are completed with the support of in-home attendant care. She has a Supports Coordinator through a local agency, and with the use of a power wheelchair, and public transportation, she attends the Inglis Day Program. In a given day, Connie may encounter, and thus be expected to follow the unique policies of, three different service providers. While providers work together seamlessly in most cases, the rules and regulations governing them can make this a challenge when they are inconsistent.

The challenges of alignment and duplication have a significant impact on provider organizations as well.

- Many providers have multiple state licensures and participate in duplicative inspections and audits. While the importance of regulations and oversight is not contested, the duplication of oversight, lack of constancy across the Departments, and lack of consistent messages about quality measures is costly and reduces the amount of time spent in helping consumers achieve their goals and live full lives.
- Today's fragmented regulatory system minimizes best practice sharing. Increasing knowledge sharing and communication between departments is a significant opportunity. The proposed unification is only an initial step toward achieving this goal. Creating multiple offices under one Deputy Secretary (as proposed) does not wholly answer the need for how communication and collaboration between departments will improve.

Timing and Sequencing of the proposed unification is extremely worrisome for providers and consumers.

Consumers, such as Connie, are going to be faced with many changes and decisions in the coming months. Connie is a consumer with the OBRA waiver. She will be approached soon to go through a re-evaluation to determine if she is eligible for Community Health Choices (CHC). Assuming she is, she will then need to go through the enrollment process for CHC. She will be doing this alone, as she does not have the help from friends and family. With the proposed unification, the potential to change her services and supports even more exists as the providers supporting Connie will be inundated with change. The Commonwealth must ensure that the timing and sequencing of major program changes including Community Health Choices, community participation support regulations and realignment of state agencies does not create provider chaos and service reductions for Connie and others.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify and have my voice heard as you embark on this endeavor. Ensuring the voice and input from our consumers across Pennsylvania is your key to success. Listening to our provider stories, and listening to the stories about how our consumers are interacting with Pennsylvania Home and Community Based services will provide valuable learnings in dedication, communication, collaboration, and commitment.

Unification is a lofty and admirable goal to improve public health and quality. My plea to you is to listen to the consumer and provider, make decisions that will enhance alignment of policy, improve collaboration and communication, and carefully assess the timing of transition.