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Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Developmental Services
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March 3, 2015

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary

ELIN M. HOWE
Commissioner

617-727-5608

The Honorable Karen Spilka, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 320
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Brian S. Dempsey, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Jennifer Flanagan, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House, Room 208
Boston, MA 02133

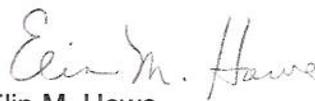
The Honorable Kay Khan, House Chair
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House, Room 146
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs:

In accordance with HB4237 (Chapter 255 of 2014) the Department of Developmental Services submits the attached report on the feasibility and cost of a searchable online repository of providers of self-determination supports, services or goods.

Please feel free to contact me should you need additional information.

Sincerely,


Elin M. Howe
Commissioner

Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services
Real Lives Bill: Progress Report on the DDS Data Repository System
February 2015

Introduction:

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is submitting this report in response to the reporting requirements specified in the Real Lives bill. HB4237 (Chapter 255 of 2014) "An Act relative to real lives" requires the Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services to submit a report to the legislature on the feasibility and cost of facilitating participant access to comparative information by making available a searchable online repository of providers of self-determination supports, services or goods. The bill also states that the repository may be limited to providers serving multiple participants, who receive \$75,000 or more of self-determination funds per year, within the 2 years preceding the year of the report or any other provider that voluntarily submits information to the department. Bill sponsor Sen. Michael Barrett (3rd Middlesex) would like additional information to be included in the repository, such as, provider legal name, organizational type (public, non-profit, government), licensure status, street/web address, hours of operation and public transportation availability. Senator Barrett stated he would like to see an increasing number of providers participate in the repository

Feasibility of Facilitating Searchable Online Repository:

The Commissioner currently chairs a biweekly workgroup to implement a work plan for the requirements of the Bill. In doing so, DDS identified 11 providers of self-determination supports that meet the criteria of providing services to multiple participants and receiving more than \$75,000 of self-determination funds within the last two fiscal years. This will be the initial group for the searchable online repository. In addition, DDS will encourage all provider agencies to participate in the searchable online repository.

The Department is currently finalizing a contract with the INDEX, a program of the UMASS Medical School, to design the data repository system. The INDEX is a web based data search engine that gathers and delivers information about programs, providers, and services for people with disabilities throughout Massachusetts. They have developed the DisabilityInfo.org and the Massachusetts Network of Information Providers (MNIP) websites both of which provide disability-related information to the public free of charge.

Cost of Facilitating Searchable Online Repository:

The INDEX has offered a proposal quote of \$57,500 that includes modifying INDEX's existing technology to capture the information specified in the law such as: Organization

Name, Address, Contact Email, Website, Transportation Options, Accessibility Features, Hours of Operation, Services offered, Populations served, Accreditation, etc. This also includes as part of their standard service the commitment of accessibility compatibility with assistive technologies, supporting the application and its users as part of INDEX's existing support structure, purchase and management of the domain name and hosting the system in INDEX's datacenter.

INDEX has also committed to provide a half-time staff dedicated to the collection and maintenance of the data collected. In addition to collecting and maintaining the data, the staff will be responsible for correspondence between constituents and INDEX' Disability Info call center. Having a single staff person dedicated to this effort will ensure data quality and consistency.

Next Steps:

It is the position of the Department that the INDEX can develop an online repository that is both feasible and affordable. The base proposal includes modifying INDEX's existing technology to capture information about the each program covered by the legislation known as the "Real Lives Bill". The Department will continue its efforts to implement the repository quickly and efficiently. We would be happy to address any questions you might have in regards to the repository and the implementation of the requirements of the Bill.