

400 Hunting Hill Circle
Greer, SC 29650
March 3, 2017

Lieutenant Governor Kevin L. Bryant
Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging
1301 Gervais St
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Lieutenant Governor Bryant,

In reference to an article in the Greenville News dated February 9, 2017 and February 28, 2017, I would like an explanation as to why there has been no progress made on the issues presented. Headlines of the February 9th article scream of the confusion of State Senators on the matter of the DDSN bill proposing that the State's Disability Agency be placed under the Governors' control. Waiting for the results of two legislative oversight reviews of the agency to decide this issue, which is not expected to be completed until later this year, is ludicrous. Lives are at stake.

As stated in the newspaper article on February 28, 2017, six more accusations of abuse and neglect have been reported since this situation first came to light. How much more of this treatment is going to be tolerated by State and local officials?


At present the current seven member governing commission, appointed by the Governor, appears to be ineffective. Does this committee report back to the Governor as to the plans, needs, and programs enacted to ensure the quality of care for these clients? It was unclear in the article. The DDSN State Director, does this seven member governing commission report their findings, recommendations etc to that individual. Is the "Director of the Agency" the same person as the DDSN State Director? **What does the Office on Aging have to do with any of this?** They have Committee on Disabilities listed on their website?

Also, what are the qualifications of these commission members? Are they in the fields of business, accounting, education, medicine? Are they community leaders with the expertise or experience in directing those efforts needed to ensure quality care and programming for the disabled? Shouldn't local board and advisory members have similar backgrounds? We are talking qualified, concerned, responsible board members who will be held accountable for their decisions affecting the lives of the disabled.

Finally, as stated by John Harrison, CPA, in the article, "the agency should have no control over any funds for direct client services; the agency should only determine eligibility, provide training, and monitor services."

I hope you continue to take an active interest and part in this issue which effects the citizens of South Carolina. I hope to see a resolution to these concerns.

Sincerely,



Eileen F. Theisen

House oversight panel to take testimony on DDSN Thursday

Tim Smith, tcsmith@greenvillenews.com

Published 11:52 a.m. ET Feb. 28, 2017 | Updated 4:54 p.m. ET Feb. 28, 2017



(Photo: TIM SMITH)

COLUMBIA -- House lawmakers want to hear from the public Thursday about the state Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.

The House Legislative Oversight Committee will take testimony Thursday at 1 p.m. from anyone wishing to talk about DDSN, as part of its study of the agency and its operations.

The Senate also has scheduled its oversight panel to examine DDSN later this year.

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"I think the House and Senate oversight process is important because it gives an opportunity for consumers and families as well as providers to voice both what is working and what is not working with the current system," said Deborah McPherson, a former DDSN commissioner and disabilities advocate.

She also noted that a Senate bill to place the agency in the governor's cabinet has been halted pending the oversight reviews.

DDSN oversees the care of thousands of those with intellectual disabilities, autism, brain and spinal cord injuries through a network of regional centers, county disabilities agencies and private providers.

The agency has been the subject of two critical Legislative Audit Council reports in the last decade, as well as reviews by the State Inspector General's Office. Supporters have criticized efforts to restructure the agency, while praising its leadership and its progress in whittling down waiting lists for services.

Interest by lawmakers in the agency during the past year has been renewed following articles in *The Greenville News* detailing allegations of abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults, audits of local disabilities boards detailing financial problems in some counties, problems with a provider that has prompted DDSN to freeze admissions three times, a lack of participation in medications training by DDSN providers and delays in addressing recommendations in years-old audits by the Legislative Audit Council.

Those who want to tell the House panel something about DDSN can sign up to speak by calling the committee at 803-212-6810, emailing the committee at hcommlegov@schouse.gov or signing up in person a few minutes prior to the meeting, which will be held in Room 110 of the Blatt Building on the Statehouse grounds complex.

Citizens can also make anonymous comments online for the committee by going to the panel's webpage and clicking on the [online survey link in red](http://www.scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee.php) (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee.php>). The online surveys will be taken until March 13.

All testimony before the committee is sworn.

"The committee's vision is for South Carolina agencies to become, and continuously remain, the most effective state agencies in the country through processes which eliminate waste and efficiently deploy resources thereby creating greater confidence in state government," the committee said in a statement. "Comments from those citizens who choose to provide input are important to the members of the House Legislative Oversight Committee because they may help direct the committee to additional potential areas for improvement with these agencies."

The committee also is scheduled to take testimony Thursday about the state Department of Archives and History and the John De La Howe School.

The panel's mission is to review each agency once each seven years.

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