

# DMHAS Legislative Newsletter

## Greetings to DMHAS Staff and Partners!

The Policy and Governmental Affairs Team at DMHAS is kicking off our 2025 Legislative Session Update with an updated, streamlined look and an introduction to our newest member – *Chandra Persaud, Legislative Program Manager*.

Chandra will be the lead legislative liaison for our agency, which means the central point of contact for anything and everything having to do with the CT General Assembly and our work with our partners in the legislative process. With over five years of federal and state legislative branch experience, a Master's Degree in Public Administration, and an outstanding professional reputation, Chandra will be essential during this session to strategically advocate for DMHAS priorities and the population we serve.

### **Back to Basics**

The CT General Assembly is a part-time Legislature that runs “long” sessions in the odd-numbered years (like this one!) and “short sessions” in the even-numbered years. This year’s session started on January 8th and will end on June 4th. A long session also marks the year in which the Governor releases the two-year budget plan – known as the **biennial budget**. Mark your calendars for February 5th, in which the proposed budget will be released publicly and presented to the Legislature.

Each state agency has a primary committee that focuses on policy issues that are far under its purview, called a **committee of cognizance**. The [Public Health Committee](#) is DMHAS’ committee of cognizance, but bills relating to our mission and work also commonly appear in [Human Services](#), [Judiciary](#), [General Law](#), [Public Safety](#), and [Appropriations](#) Committees. Our team monitors all committees and bills for any potential impact to our agency operations or the population we serve.



## Emerging Themes

In a long session, the first month mostly consists of legislators filing proposed bills or committees raising concepts to introduce a new idea or change in the law. Committees have to take action to move these ideas into the drafting phase, and while detailed bill language has yet to be developed, many of these ideas may not move forward.

### **Some emerging themes of interest include:**



**Reaction to Change in Federal Leadership.** There are many bills that seek to promote the new federal administration's agenda on a state level, as well as those that attempt to mitigate or protect against any policy changes that may occur as a result of the administration change.

**Fiscal Guardrails.** The state's "fiscal guardrails" are designed to protect state finances from economic downturns and fiscal emergencies by keeping the state budget in balance, building up reserves, and paying down debt. While these policies have contributed to the state's favorable financial performance in recent years, they have also come under increased scrutiny from policymakers.



**Special Education.** Both the House and Senate made improving the quality and delivery of special education their number one priority this year.

**Artificial Intelligence.** The proposal to regulate AI in our state has garnered national attention. Specific themes this year include preventing algorithmic discrimination in healthcare.



**Energy Affordability.** High utility bills last summer have sparked discussion about public benefits charges, and hardship consumer protections, as well as other related issues, which will likely be topics of discussion.

**Prescription Drug Affordability.** The legislative bipartisan [Prescription Drug Task Force](#) sought to include a wide range of stakeholders to discuss items from pricing to innovation to access. We should expect to see a bill covering a variety of topics in this area.



**Housing and Homelessness.** Housing affordability, lack of housing stock, and increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness are all hot topic issues this session, with renter protections being of particular interest.

## **What's Happening Next?**

In the next few weeks, public hearings on fully drafted bills will begin. We intend to share periodic updates of bills that may be of interest to our community.

Future editions will include an overview of DMHAS' agency proposal, as well as an explanation of the Governor's proposed budget for our agency once it is released.

## **Thank You for Staying Informed!**

Your engagement helps us grow — see you next time!

*In partnership, Chandra & Kelly*

### **Did You Know?**

This year, the CT General Assembly added *two* new committees! Check them out below:

[The Select Committee on Special Education](#)

[The Government Oversight Committee](#)