

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Senator Spilka Advocates for Department of Mental Retardation Name Change, Secures Support in Senate

Boston, MA - Senate Majority Leader Frederick E. Berry (D-Peabody), Senator Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland), and Senator Stephen M. Brewer (D-Barre) announced on Thursday that the FY09 Senate Budget will include a provision that changes name of the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This new department title is a significant development in the effort to reverse the stigma that often follows the served population.

Senate Majority Leader Berry spoke before the Senate in strong support of this amendment saying, "Those being served by the Department deserve the same respect as every other citizen of the Commonwealth. By removing the expression, I believe that we are finally giving this population the dignity they deserve. 22 years ago I sponsored the budget amendment that separated the Department of Mental Retardation from the Department of Mental Health, and I am proud to once again be involved with another long overdue and necessary change."

"This name change is more than just symbolic," Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) said. "This is a significant step toward changing attitudes and perceptions about a population of people who are part of our society and deserve to be treated with the same respect and dignity as any other person. This wouldn't have been possible without the commitment and leadership of Senator Berry, Senator Spilka and Senator Brewer. They fought long and hard for this change, and I expect to see it come out intact after a compromise budget is reached with the House of Representatives. This is a great day for the Commonwealth."

Massachusetts is currently one of only six states in the nation that uses the words "mental retardation" in its department title. The Commonwealth will now join 37 other states that have removed the expression from their departments' names in the past decade.

"I've received hundreds of phone calls and emails from families who tell me that seeing the word 'retardation' on the envelope from DMR undercuts all of the sense of accomplishment that their loved ones feel," states Senator Spilka. "As a big sister to someone with Downs Syndrome, I've experienced first-hand how words and labels can make a difference. I cringe every time I hear the word 'retarded,' and I've taught my own sons to teach their friends how hurtful this term can be. This is a great day for the citizens of the Commonwealth. I am proud to be a part of this monumental change and grateful to Senate Majority Leader Berry and Senator Brewer for their hard work."

"The word retarded has a negative connotation. This is not how the Commonwealth should be classifying this very capable group of citizens and I am proud that the Senate has chosen to change the name," said Senator Brewer, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. "I would like to thank Senator Berry for his leadership in filing this amendment, and Senator Spilka for her moving speech on the Senate floor in its support. This small language change will make a world of a difference in the lives of many."

All eligibility standards of DMR will be maintained under this budget amendment, ensuring that those served under the existing title will see a smooth transition within the new name. Costs associated with this name change will be minimal and will only involve administrative expenses.

5.22.08 DMR Name Change.txt

DMR No.	Name	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone	County	Notes
1001	John Doe	123 Main St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-123-4567	Hampden	
1002	Jane Smith	456 Elm St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-234-5678	Hampden	
1003	Robert Johnson	789 Oak St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-345-6789	Hampden	
1004	Mary Williams	101 Pine St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-456-7890	Hampden	
1005	David Brown	202 Cedar St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-567-8901	Hampden	
1006	Susan Green	303 Birch St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-678-9012	Hampden	
1007	Michael White	404 Maple St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-789-0123	Hampden	
1008	Laura Black	505 Walnut St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-890-1234	Hampden	
1009	Christopher Gray	606 Chestnut St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-901-2345	Hampden	
1010	Amanda King	707 Spruce St	Springfield	MA	01103	555-012-3456	Hampden	