Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, this afternoon’s hearing focuses on the Governor’s common sense restructuring of some vital state government services in an effort to better serve New Jersey’s residents.

All of us will discuss these changes, the impact to our respective departments, provide insight into the rationale for program placements, and assure you that the transition of these services will be managed thoughtfully.

I think it’s important to note that thus far, I’m aware of only positive feedback from a good number of our stakeholders – and to date, we’ve held meetings with many groups and families affected by the changes. The response has been positive. Lots of questions; but positive.

Specific to the Department of Human Services... We will be integrating senior services, currently provided through the Department of Health, into our operations.

As the single state agency for Medicaid benefits, we have been working in partnership with the Department of Health to administer many programs and services to the aging population. Under the proposed restructure, all Federal and state funded services and supports for seniors now will be coordinated within one Department.

Moving senior services to DHS creates a single point of access for seniors and people with disabilities and their caregivers regardless of Medicaid eligibility. The benefits of this move were very much highlighted during the discussions and design of the Medicaid Comprehensive Waiver – in which the desire was to improve the coordination of Federal and State funded programs for seniors and people with disabilities, including people who require specialized services for their physical or late-onset disabilities. And, it allows for a continuum of coordinated and integrated disability and long-term care resources, which we believe will show improved health outcomes, realize the outcome of receiving appropriate care in appropriate settings and create the opportunity and the ability for aging adults to remain at home with proper supports.

The planned move to managed Long Term Services and Supports further develops New Jersey’s progress in supporting seniors and people with disabilities desire to work and live in their communities for as long as possible. One very practical benefit of implementing managed Long Term Services and Supports will be the expansion of the home and community-based services package to any qualifying Medicaid-eligible enrollee, not limited to people who currently fit into
one of the current Home and Community Based waiver programs. Additionally, because the current federal Medicaid statute is biased towards institutional care; our waiver seeks to direct services to the community.

With respect to moving the children and adolescents now served by DHS to DCF, this idea has been discussed by many advocates and stakeholders – really since the time that DCF was created. Governor Christie agreed with the notion that one department should be serving the whole child. This restructuring ends the historic fragmentation that now exists – particularly for families whose children need services and supports from both departments. With its wide-ranging network of community services, DCF is positioned to provide a holistic approach to serving children with autism and other developmental disabilities. The departments will work together to transition adolescents, aged 16 to 21, as they move into adulthood.

Commissioner Blake will expand on this realignment in her remarks. Thank you.