

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6320

AN ACT CONCERNING THE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ADVISORY

Title: COUNCIL.

Vote Date: 2/23/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/16/2021

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill amends the current membership of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council to allow for up to three chairpersons. One chairperson must be an individual diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The additional chairperson shall be a parent or guardian of an adult or child with autism spectrum disorder. They will act as Chairpersons of the council, alongside the Commissioner of the Department of Social Service, or the commissioner's designee. The addition of a third chairperson brings leadership representation to parents, which allows broader insight into the diverse experiences of individuals and families living with autism spectrum disorder.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Diedre Gifford, Commissioner, Department of Social Services, supports this bill because DSS believes the tri-chair structure is the ideal leadership of the Council.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Andrew Komarow, Founder, Planning Across the Spectrum, supports this bill as long as it is amended to ensure that a co-chair of the council is always an adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He explains that adults with autism are severely underserved in Connecticut, which is what makes their voices imperative on this Council. One other amendment Andrew advocates for is: any chairperson who is a parent has an individual with ASD without an intellectual disability. He comments that the council was put in place to support this

population. Andrew welcomes the addition of parent voices and co-chairs but explains they cannot exist “at the expense of silencing autistic voices.”

Lynn Ricci, President and Chief Executive Officer, Hospital for Special Care,

Sen. Paul Formica

Dr. Robert D. Keder, Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center,

They express support for the bill because they understand that the Autism Advisory Council provides a meaningful voice for individuals living with ASD, and their families. Ms. Ricci, Sen. Formica, and Dr. Keder all mention that these voices will help to better guide policy and identify new solutions within the current system.

Ms. Ricci is a member of the council and believes that increasing opportunities for individuals living with ASD, and parents of children or adults impacted by ASD is critically important for strengthening the influence of the council.

Sen. Formica comments that individuals who serve on the Advisory Council are best equipped to offer compelling insights into how our state can better serve individuals living with ASD.

Dr. Keder supports this bill as it allows for the important inclusion of a child with autism to influence the policymaking process through their parents. He believes that this bill is one step towards disability inclusion and removing barriers for individuals to participate in society.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

There are no sources of opposition for this bill.

Reported by: Gianna Vollano

Date: March 8, 2021