

Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6554

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING AGING AND COVID-19.

Vote Date: 3/11/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/9/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Aging Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many seniors physically, socially and emotionally. More knowledge of how pandemics effect our senior population would be beneficial to reduce the negative effects of both the current pandemic, COVID-19, and any future pandemics. The bill directs the Dept. of Public Health, Dept. of Aging and Disability Services and Dept. of Social Services to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health, safety and welfare of seniors. A report shall be filed no later than November 1, 2021 to committees having cognizance of matters relating to aging, human services and public health and it will include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health, safety and welfare of seniors and include recommendations to mitigate the impact of future pandemics.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Amy Porter, Commissioner, Dept. of Aging and Disability Services: Their testimony was submitted as comments on the bill and they suggest that the timeline and structure called for in the bill does not create the optimal path forward for this goal since the COVID-19 outbreak is not over. A report that is to be completed by November of this year may not be able to encompass at the is known and all will be known about this pandemic. It may also be difficult to provide you with the best recommendations possible for future pandemics. They believe that there are many people, groups and stakeholders who should be part of this review and the proposal that includes three state agencies may not be sufficient to the task.

Deidre Gifford, MD, MPH, Acting Commissioner, Connecticut Dept. of Public Health: Their testimony was offered in opposition to the proposal. They feel it is important to note that the DPH only has jurisdiction over nursing homes, and assisted living services that take place

in a managed a residential community setting. During the COVID-19 pandemic they worked extensively with nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. They also participated in the Nursing Home and Assisted Living Oversight Working Group which was convened in November 2020 to review the effects of COVID-19. They feel that the requirements of this legislation are duplicative of their past and current efforts and request that this bill not move forward.

Dept. of Social Services: They appreciate the intent of this bill, but they respectfully submit that it would provide the Dept. the ability to conduct a more comprehensive investigation if the report date were modified to early in 2022. While the state is making progress against the COVID-19 pandemic, much more needs to be done before they can consider the virus contained enough to warrant this proposed study. Changing the due date of the report will allow them to examine the full impact of this emergency.

Michael Werner, Attorney, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity: Their testimony offered support for this proposal, but they point out that a majority impacted and relevant group that has been left out of studies so far includes community living older adults. It is important to now begin to assess the impact on the state's older adults, who have been living in isolation at home during the pandemic with the subsequent inaccessibility of formerly available community supports.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mag Morelli, President, LeagingAge Connecticut: They offered testimony in support of this proposal and indicated that they would be interested in assisting.

Kathleen Flaherty, Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc.: They are in support of this measure but suggest an amendment that would include younger disabled residents of nursing homes and other congregate facilities.

Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO, Connecticut Assoc. for Healthcare at Home: They support this bill and indicate that they would be interested in assisting.

Valerie Marcella, Constituent, Niantic: She expresses her support for this legislation and offered antidotal information about her grandmother and how she has suffered because of the isolation forced on her by the pandemic.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No testimony offered in opposition.

**Reported by: Richard Ferrari, Assistant Clerk
Richard O'Neil, Assistant Clerk
Joseph Perkus, Clerk**

Date: 3/17/2021