

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6576

AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONDISCLOSURE OF RESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES OF CERTAIN EMPLOYEES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF

Title: INFORMATION ACT.

Vote Date: 3/31/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/10/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Under the Freedom of Information Act this bill would prohibit public agencies to disclose the residential addresses of employees of the Office of the Attorney General. The bill excludes this prohibition when residential addresses are required for election matters, such as voter registration or absentee ballots.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Freedom of Information Commission: FOI commission submitted testimony in opposition of this bill. They explain, while they understand the security concerns, every year, it seems, another agency or profession attempts to have the addresses of their employees protected. They explain that this bill would not solve the issue in the way that many would hope. Addresses would still be public via land records, voter records, and grand lists. They state that, the reality is that times have changed since the initial enactment of Section 1- 217. For better or worse, the fact is that the residential addresses of most people are now readily available for free, or for a nominal charge, on the Internet and through other commercial services”.

Mike Savino, President, Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information: Savino testified in opposition to this bill. They explain that residential address in land and voting records are important to the public trust and should not be protected from such. They explain that an internet search can produce a great deal of personal information, including

addresses, that are not necessarily contained in an employee's personnel file. Due to this fact, they state, that this legislation would not achieve its intended result.

William Tong, Attorney General, State of Connecticut: Attorney General Tong submitted testimony in support of this bill. They state that the employee's at their office should receive the same protection as they do, due to the nature of their work. They explain that there have been situations with employees that's have required intervention of law enforcement, resulting in the arrest of an individual who had stalked and harassed an employee, as well as vandalism, threatening letters and phone calls. They state that the safety of our public employees is incredibly important and being put at an increasing amount of risk. Tong states that we should do everything we can to protect those who serve us.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Association of Connecticut Assistant Attorneys General, AFT-CT Local 6574: The ACAAG testified that employees of the Office of the Attorney General have daily interactions with the public, not all being positive. They explain that it is imperative that the residential addresses of the employees are not made public so they are able to do the work of the Office without fear; "Although it is not a frequent occurrence, some matters handled by the Office result in contentious litigation, which have left employees either with grievance complaints, harassment, stalking, death threats, or the need to familiarize themselves with workplace violence policies in order to keep everyone safe".

Brian Mezick, Connecticut State Marshal, State Marshal's Association of Connecticut: Mezick testified that they are supportive of protecting the home addresses of the public employees in the Attorney General's office as they should not have to return home after work in fear. Mezick expressed that state marshals should also be added to the provisions. They state that due to the nature of their work and having to serve restraining/civil protective orders, custody order and make civil arrests, their addresses should be protected. Mezick also adds that local firefighters, employees of DCF, the judicial branch, CHRO, Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services should all have their home addresses protected as well.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim senior policy counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT): Moore testified that this bill would restrain people's access to information that they have a right to obtain while also creating unequal privacy protections based solely on their occupation.

Reported by: Jenna Schwerdtle

Date: 3/31/2021