

Veterans' Affairs Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-614

AN ACT EXEMPTING VETERANS FROM PAYMENT OF THE FARES FOR BUS

Title: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES.

Vote Date: 3/18/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Finance, Revenue and Bonding

PH Date: 2/18/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' Affairs Committee
Sen. Paul Cicarella 34th Dist
Rep. Dorinda Borer, 115th Dist

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would allow veterans to ride Bus Public Transportation Services at no cost, provided they present a license or identification card that indicates veteran status. Many veterans have trouble with transportation and use public transportation for employment, so exempting them from fare payments can reduce the financial burden as veterans seek to reintegrate into civilian life.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Commissioner Joseph Giulietti, CT Department of Transportation](#): Commissioner Giulietti submitted written testimony stating that the introduction of this bill could possibly lead to other discounts and would require a financial impact analysis as well as other equity analyses and a public hearing related to Title VI. He also included census data which shows that there are nearly 200,000 veterans in CT; if all took advantage of the fare waiver, it would impact revenue for CTtransit. He further stated, "this loss of revenue would increase the subsidy required to operate the bus systems which would have a fiscal impact on DOT's budget and the Special Transportation Fund".

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Sen. Paul Cicarella, 34th Dist.](#) : Senator Cicarella submitted written testimony in favor of this bill, stating that it promotes a higher quality of life and means for veterans to be able to get to

work on the public bus system. He also added that while speaking with the Department of Veterans' Affairs Commissioner, they discussed issues faced by veterans, including employment and the need for transportation to find and maintain a job. This bill would help to alleviate that burden during challenging economic times.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Doug Holcomb, General Manager, Greater Bridgeport Transit](#): Mr. Holcomb submitted written testimony stating that while the removal of barriers is an important matter and the intent of this bill is clear, the fiscal impact it can have on certain regions is important. In the Bridgeport region, and prior to Covid-19, rider contribution "paid for approximately 30% of the associated expenses". This could hurt both local municipalities and access to State funding. Mr. Holcomb reiterates that while he does not object to honoring veterans, it is important to note that providing free services to veterans or others leads to revenue loss.

[Mary Tamoloni, Executive Director, CT Association for Community Transportation](#): Ms. Tamoloni submitted written testimony stating that the bus systems currently depend on rider fares to pay for expenses associated with the provision of the services and that possible reduction of revenue could jeopardize bus services. She also stated that the average fare is \$1.00, including other discounts that are federally required for seniors, riders with disabilities, and those who receive Medicaid. She welcomes the removal of barriers where they can be found but stresses the importance of considering current financial constraints on the transit operators in the state. If revenue decreases due to this legislation, that revenue will need to increase from other sources.

Reported by: Edward Jacome, Assistant Clerk Date: 03/22/21