

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-761

AN ACT PERMITTING THE USE OF CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM GRANT FUNDS TO OFFSET A PARTICIPATING CANDIDATE'S CHILD CARE COSTS.

Title: FUNDS TO OFFSET A PARTICIPATING CANDIDATE'S CHILD CARE COSTS.

Vote Date: 3/29/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/19/2021

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:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Effective July 1, 2021, this bill will allow for qualifying candidates running for office in the State of Connecticut to make use of the Citizens' Election Program grant funds to offset any child care costs incurred during the campaign season for children under age 13.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Michael Brandi, Executive Director & General Counsel State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC): SEEC cites the Superior Court ruling from January 2021, which allowed for Citizens' Election Program funding to be used to cover child care costs, only if the child care costs are a direct result of campaign activity, if the child care costs are reasonable and customary for the services rendered if the costs are properly documented by the campaign. That being said, SEEC is committed to working with the Committee to help draft solutions on any issues that may arise in relation to the bill.

State of Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO): In their written testimony, CHRO expressed support for SB 761 and its sister bill, SB 883. CHRO believes that adding child care expenses as a qualified and recoverable expense will encourage more people to run for office who might not have initially had the resources to cover child care costs. CHRO cites statistics that show that the Connecticut General Assembly is far less diverse than the populations that they represent. By allowing for the Citizens' Election Fund to cover child care expenses, women, especially women of color, have a better opportunity to bring their diverse experience to government and partake in the lawmaking process.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director, Common Cause Connecticut: The testimony provided by Common Cause Connecticut cited the Superior Court ruling in favor of Caitlin Clarkson Pereira, who used funding from the Citizens' Election Program. As long as the child care expenses were a "direct result of campaign activity," "reasonable and customary for the services rendered," and "documented by the campaign," the Court permitted the use of public campaign funding to reimburse child care expenses. Allowing for child care expenses means that more parents will participate in our government, which is something the Common Cause believes will benefit the state.

Emily Hoyle, Representative, The Connecticut Women's Consortium: The Connecticut Women's Consortium cites the fact that nearly 2.5 million women in America have left their jobs since the start of the pandemic, mainly because they have had to provide child care for their children who are learning remotely. However, the Consortium contends that this issue has existed well before 2020, with child care costs posing a major burden to women in the workforce. In passing SB 760, the Consortium believes that parents will be empowered to achieve their career and political goals without having to worry about child care expenses.

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut: The ACLU-CT submitted written testimony in support of SB 761 as well as SB 833, which includes identical provisions. The current makeup of the Connecticut General Assembly is only 33.5% women, despite the fact that women make up 51% of the state's population. In addition to gender, the ACLU-CT contends that the makeup of the General Assembly is skewed in terms of race, generation and wealth. These disparities exacerbate the barriers that individuals may face in terms of running for office. Referring to the success of the Citizens' Election Program, which has helped vulnerable groups increase their presence in state government, the ACLU-CT believes that the program should be extended to incorporate child care costs incurred while campaigning. Allowing for child care costs to be covered by campaign money, women in particular have greater flexibility to pursue political office.

Nicole Sanclemente, Policy and Program Associate, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF): CWEALF supports SB 761, viewing it as a critical step towards gender equity. CWEALF contends that women's leadership is a critically important component in terms of addressing the coronavirus pandemic and its disproportionate impacts. In allowing candidates to access funding to cover child care expenses, the State of Connecticut removes one of the most substantial barriers that women face when contemplating a run for office.

Dr. Gayle Alberda, Assistant Professor Politics & Masters of Public Administration Director, Fairfield University: Dr. Alberda emphasized the fact that women are underrepresented in political office. In Connecticut, just 64 of the 187 state legislators in the state are women. Dr. Alberda contends that this gap in representation is a result of the fact that women face familial and domestic obligations that prevent them from pursuing a political career. Dr. Alberda believes women with children have been systematically excluded from

running for office because of the expectation that they tend to all domestic responsibilities. Allowing for child care costs to be covered using campaign funds would foster a women-friendly electoral environment and alleviate the burden women face when running for office. Dr. Alberda cites the fact that 17 other states have passed legislation allowing for campaign funds to cover campaign-related child care costs.

Jonathan Perloe: Mr. Perloe wrote testimony in favor of the bill. Mr. Perloe believes that the General Assembly is in a position to ensure that the State Elections Enforcement Commission administers the Citizens' Election Program in an equitable manner. Mr. Perloe makes note of one of the principal objectives of the Citizens' Election Program, which is to lower the costs of a political campaign so that more people run for office. However, Mr. Perloe writes that political office seems attainable only for affluent individuals who might not have to worry about the expenses associated with child care. By amending the Citizens' Election Program to allow for child care to be deemed as a cost worthy of public funding, Mr. Perloe feels that more diverse candidates will seek public office.

Alex Taubes: Mr. Taubes is a civil rights attorney who is in strong support of this bill. In his capacity as an attorney, Mr. Taubes represented Caitlin Clarkson Pereira, who sought to change the law and allow for the candidates to use Citizens' Election Program funding to cover child care costs. While the Connecticut Superior Court ruling her Pereira's favor, Mr. Taubes hopes that SB 761 will codify the court ruling and expand its applicability to all future candidates.

The following individuals submitted testimony in support of SB-761. They cited reasons similar to those stated in the aforementioned testimonies:

Sarah Hague

Laura Lavelle

Jenn Lawlor

Tom Swan, Executive Director, Connecticut Citizen Action Group

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Trevor Hoffman

Date: 03/29/2021