

Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-899

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR SAFETY ZONES.

Vote Date: 3/11/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/23/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Aging Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Elder abuse is a real and serious problem and currently sex offenders may locate near senior centers and other facilities housing or serving our senior population. The bill adds senior centers and other facilities serving or housing senior citizens to those notified of sex offenders in their neighborhoods and provides education to senior citizens on how to protect themselves from the threat of sex offenders.

The JFS language deleted new language that senior centers and other facilities serving, or housing seniors be specifically notified if a sex offender moves into the area. The community response education program already exists under current law; seniors were specifically added to those in the community who would receive such education. The statute states resources "may" be added for such programs, the new language makes clear that such resources may be added for senior specific programs. There is no mandate, as in current statute, to provide these resources.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Senator Cathy Osten, Connecticut General Assembly: She offered testimony in support of this proposal and believes that this will enhance senior safety zones in order to prohibit registered sex offenders from visiting or living in proximity to our seniors.

Michael Werner, Attorney, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity: They offered testimony in support of this bill. They point out that SA 14-20 was

passed, and the Commission on Aging submitted the Report of the Senior Safety Zone Task Force in January 2015.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

The Report of the Senior Safety Zone Task Force: The entire Report was submitted as testimony to support this bill which includes a September 2014 report issued by the Office of Legislative research.

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities: They support this bill but find the language in lines 47-49 to be an unnecessary mandate and a redundant step in the notification process.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Cindy Prizio, Executive Director, One Standard of Justice: They offered testimony in opposition to this bill. Studies have shown that sexual recidivism is low, and it is just as unlikely that most people will sexually reoffend and the longer they are offense free the less likely they will reoffend. An approach without public notification schemes can protect our citizens and create safe communities.

Kathleen Flaherty, Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc.: They are opposed to this bill and state the current law permits the disclosure to senior centers and there is no need to amend the law to specifically included seniors' centers and other facilities that serve or house senior citizens. They do not object to the development of community education materials.

Kelly McConney Moore, Senior Policy Counsel, ACLU of Connecticut: Elder abuse is a real and serious problem and elder sexual abuse is an underreported and causes serious harm to seniors. They believe the solutions proposed by this bill are based on fear and not facts and provide a policy that will not reduce harm to elders but instead will create false security in seniors. Sex offenders' registries can also constitute an additional extrajudicial form of punishment and can lead to retaliation against people who are trying to rehabilitate themselves. They are convinced that the more difficult we make social reintegration for people who have been convicted of crimes, the less safe our communities will be. The use of registries should not be expanded absent evidence that the registry would lead to a reduction in community harm and based on the data they have seen there is no such evidence.

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

Date: 3/23/2021