

# Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-980

AN ACT ELIMINATING INCOME AND ASSET LIMITS FOR THE MED-

**Title:** CONNECT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

**Vote Date:** 3/31/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/11/2021

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Human Services Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill seeks to eliminate income and asset limits for working persons with disabilities to qualify for Medicaid. This bill aims to expand medical coverage for working individuals with disabilities, by removing barriers to eligibility.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

Deidre S. Gifford, Commissioner, Department of Social Services, opposes this bill due to the uncertainty of the number of individuals who may be eligible to enroll under this bill. Commissioner Gifford also notes the lack of appropriations to support additional enrollees. Commissioner Gifford notes that although administrative efficiencies would result in cost savings, it may not be enough to offset the costs of increased enrollment. Commissioner Gifford notes that the MED-Connect program allows “eligible individuals to work and retain assets greater than what is allowable under traditional Medicaid coverage groups.”

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

Senator Martin Looney, President Pro-Tempore supports this bill. Sen. Looney provides a brief history of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. He believes that eliminating or raising the income and asset limits for CT’s program “could reduce the unintended discriminatory consequence of the federal social security disability (SSDI) rules.” He also comments that the asset limit of \$10,000 seems unrealistically low in today’s economy. Sen. Looney notes that raising or eliminating the asset limit would increase the

number of insured residents, which is a benefit for the state. He also notes that the program is jointly funded with the federal government.

Black and Brown United in Action  
Sheldon Toubman, Attorney, New Haven Legal Assistance

They support this bill with a recommendation for substitute language. They believe this bill should be amended to address the shockingly low income and asset limits for HUSKY C, which covers many elderly and disabled people who are not able to work. There is an immediate need to provide relief for individuals who cannot qualify for HUSKY C, except by “spending down” excess income. They request that the income limits for HUSKY C are increased to match, at a minimum, the income limits for HUSKY D, which are set at 138% of the federal poverty level. Mr. Toubman notes that the bill, as it stands, is an “unnecessary solution of a non-problem of access to Medicaid.” Med-Connect currently has higher income and asset limits than other Medicaid coverage groups. They both urge this amendment to support a severely under-resourced population.

Sharon Geanuracos  
Susan Salters, Disability Advocate

They support this bill because the asset and income limits create barriers for persons with disabilities to achieve independence. In some cases, it prevents individuals from saving, and thus from becoming self-reliant. This bill would remove these potential-blocking barriers. Ms. Salters explains how critically important this program is for individuals with disabilities to receive health care coverage, maintain a job, and live an independent life. Ms. Salters urges an increase in income and asset levels for HUSKY C, as well as the elimination of the spend-down requirement. As the HUSKY C program currently stands, many individuals enrolled cannot utilize all of its benefits and struggle to receive adequate health care.

Tom Wade supports this bill, although he believes the Connecticut program has some limitations. The first being, the income limits, which disqualify individuals making over \$75,000. He notes that the income limits deter some people from working jobs that might put them over the limit. Individuals who disqualify because of the income limit, often cannot afford to pay the high costs of paying PCA’s out of pocket. Mr. Wade notes that another limitation of the Med-Connect program is the inclusion of a spouse’s assets in determining eligibility. He mentions that people with disabilities have long had to choose “between taking a chance at gainful employment and hoping they would obtain medical benefits”; this burden should no longer exist.

Richard Famiglietti, supports this bill. Mr. Famiglietti explains that the current income level for Med-Connect is very restricting when planning for a future with a lifelong disability. While he supports the bill, he believes it should be expanded to eliminate income and asset limits for non-working individuals.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed

**Reported by: Gianna Vollano**

**Date: April 8, 2021**

