
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 5

AN ACT CONCERNING ONLINE DATING OPERATORS, ONLINE CHILD GROOMING AND HARASSMENT, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING AND PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

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Appropriates \$1.44 million from the General Fund to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for domestic violence child and family advocates at domestic violence agencies

SUMMARY

This bill makes various unrelated changes in laws affecting online dating and child grooming, domestic violence training for certain employees, employment discrimination and workplace sexual harassment, and anti-discrimination protections for family violence victims.

Among other things, the bill:

1. establishes verification requirements for online dating operators and creates a (a) working group to make recommendations on criminalizing child grooming and (b) grant program to provide education and training on online abuse (§§ 1-6);
2. extends anti-discrimination statutes to cover employers with one or two employees (§ 7);
3. requires state agencies to provide domestic violence training and

- certain employers to post related information (§§ 8 & 9);
4. broadens the definition of sexual harassment and applies related workplace requirements to elected officials (§§ 10-12);
 5. prohibits discriminatory practices based on someone's status as a family violence victim (§§ 13-25);
 6. prohibits someone from asserting, as a defense to an employment discrimination claim, that the conduct was not severe or pervasive, and prohibits settlements from imposing certain restrictions on the employee (§ 10); and
 7. appropriates funds to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for advocates at domestic violence agencies (§§ 26 & 27).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2022, except that the (1) DESPP grant program (§ 6) and DSS appropriations (§§ 26 & 27) provisions are effective July 1, 2022, and (2) working group on criminalizing child grooming provision is effective upon passage (§ 5).

§§ 1-4 — ONLINE DATING SERVICES

Establishes verification requirements, including a comprehensive identity check, that online dating operators must complete before a user may create an online dating account and authorizes the DCP commissioner to penalize violators up to \$25,000 per violation

Online Dating Operators (§ 1)

The bill generally establishes standards for anyone who operates a software application designed to facilitate online dating (i.e., online dating operator). Under the bill, "online dating" is using software applications to initiate relationships with other individuals for romance, sex, or marriage.

Under the bill, starting on October 1, 2022, online dating operators must require users (i.e., anyone who uses their online dating services) to establish an online dating account to use the operator's online dating software application. (The bill does not establish an age limit for a user.)

Online Dating Accounts (§ 1)

To enable a user to establish an online dating account, the bill

specifically requires online dating operators to:

1. create an electronic user file (see below) and encrypt all confidential information in the file;
2. verify the user's identity through a comprehensive identity check (see below) or through an alternative method for remote multi-sourced authentication, such as third-party and governmental databases that the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP); may approve; and
3. record the user's certification that the information he or she provided is accurate.

Under the bill, online dating accounts are nontransferable and must be unique to the user who establishes the account.

Electronic User File (§ 1)

Under the bill, an online dating operator's required electronic user files must include at least:

1. the user's legal name, date of birth, address, email address, and telephone number;
2. the entire or last four digits of the user's Social Security number or the equivalent for a foreign user (e.g., passport or tax identification numbers) (the bill does not define "foreign user");
3. any other information collected from the user that is used to verify the user's identity; and
4. the date and method of identity verification.

Comprehensive Identity Check (§ 2)

Starting October 1, 2022, an online dating operator must conduct a comprehensive identity check of an individual before allowing him or her to open an online dating account. The bill allows operators to contract with a third party to carry out the identity verification.

The comprehensive identity check must include at least an identity search of the individual's name, date of birth, address, and the last four digits of the individual's Social Security number or an equivalent identification number for a foreign user.

Before establishing the online dating account, the operator must use identity authentication questions that require the individual seeking to open the account to provide information known only to him or her (e.g., previous addresses or credit transactions), unless DCP provides written approval of an alternate authentication method with equivalent or greater security and effectiveness.

Confidentiality and Record Retention (§§ 1 & 3)

Starting October 1, 2022, the bill generally requires online dating operators to develop their online dating services to maintain the security and confidentiality of participation and all information in an electronic user file. The bill creates an exception that requires these operators to disclose the information in response to a lawful subpoena, summons, warrant, or court order.

Online dating operators must (1) maintain electronic user files for two years after an online dating account is terminated and (2) destroy all copies of the file after the record retention period expires.

Investigations and Penalties for Violations (§ 4)

The bill authorizes DCP to penalize violators by (1) issuing fines up to \$25,000 per violation, (2) accepting an offer in compromise, or (3) taking other actions allowed under law or regulations. DCP may take these actions if the operator fails to collect, keep confidential, or disclose information as required.

The bill also allows the commissioner or her designee to:

1. conduct investigations and hold hearings on any issue related to the online operator provisions and
2. issue subpoenas, administer oaths, compel testimony, and order the production of books, records, and documents.

Under the bill, if anyone refuses to appear, testify, or produce any book, record, or document when ordered to, the commissioner or her designee may apply to Superior Court for an appropriate enforcement order.

Additionally, the bill authorizes the attorney general, at the request of the commissioner or his designee, to apply to Superior Court, in the name of the state, for an order to restrain and enjoin anyone from violating the bill's provisions on online operators.

§ 5 — WORKING GROUP ON POTENTIALLY CRIMINALIZING CHILD GROOMING

Establishes a 10-member working group to develop recommendations for legislation to criminalize child grooming

Purpose

The bill establishes a 10-member working group to examine and develop recommendations on potential legislation to criminalize child grooming. Under the bill, child grooming includes persuading, coercing, inducing, or enticing a minor to:

1. sexually exploit or traffic the minor,
2. create child pornography, or
3. engage in prostitution.

Composition

The working group includes the following members:

1. two individuals appointed one each by the Senate president and the House speaker,
2. two individuals appointed one each by the Senate and the House minority leaders,
3. four individuals appointed one each by the Judiciary Committee chairpersons and ranking members,
4. the chief public defender or her designee, and

5. the chief state’s attorney or his or her designee.

The appointed members may be legislators.

Timeline

The appointing authorities must (1) make their appointments within 60 days after the bill’s passage and (2) provide a copy of the appointment to the Judiciary Committee administrator within seven days after the appointment.

The chairperson, the Senate president’s nominee, must schedule and hold the working group’s first meeting within 90 days after the bill passes.

Reporting and Termination

The working group must (1) report its recommendations to the Judiciary Committee by December 31, 2022, and (2) terminate on the later of the date it submits the report or December 31, 2022.

§ 6 — ONLINE ABUSE PREVENTION GRANT PROGRAM

Creates a grant program, administered by DESPP, to prevent online abuse and provide educational and training opportunities to inform people about identifying, reporting, responding to, and avoiding online abuse

Administration and Purpose

The bill establishes a grant program to be administered by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), in consultation with the State-Wide Hate Crimes Advisory Council, to provide educational and training opportunities to (1) prevent online abuse and (2) inform people about identifying, reporting, responding to, and avoiding online abuse. Under the bill, “online abuse” means the following acts, when conducted using any interactive computer service:

1. speech or conduct motivated by hatred, prejudice, or bigotry towards a person or group based on the person’s actual or perceived religion, national origin, alienage, color, race, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or disability;
2. harassment, stalking, swatting, or doxing (i.e., publicly revealing

previously private personal information about someone, usually via the internet); or

3. an assault.

Requests for Proposals (RFPs) From Eligible Entities

Each fiscal year, within three months after receiving funds from the state, DESPP must issue a request for proposals from eligible entities. Under the bill, an “eligible entity” must be located in Connecticut and may be any of the following or any entity operating under them:

1. local or regional school districts,
2. historical societies,
3. tax-exempt entities registered with the Office of the Secretary of the State,
4. government agencies,
5. constituent units of the state higher education system, or
6. public libraries.

Each RFP response must specify:

1. the types of online abuse that the eligible entity proposes to address, which must conform to the program’s purpose;
2. the methods used to achieve the program’s goals;
3. the entity’s other specific goals;
4. the target audience of the training and information that the entity would provide;
5. whether the entity is replicating a program found to have a high likelihood of success as determined by a cost-benefit analysis in a peer reviewed academic journal; and
6. the amount of matching funds the entity will contribute, if any.

Grant Awards

The bill authorizes DESPP to award grants for any programming or service that prevents online abuse or furthers the other program goals, including training teachers or school professionals, archiving, public murals, curriculum development, and marketing.

It allows eligible entities to use awarded funds collectively, including regionally, through coordinated efforts and conferences that achieve the program's goals.

The bill limits the total grant amount that DESPP may award an eligible entity to a maximum of \$30,000 during any fiscal year.

§ 7 — APPLICATION OF ANTIDISCRIMINATION LAWS TO EMPLOYERS WITH ONE OR TWO EMPLOYEES

Subjects employers with one or two employees to the antidiscrimination laws, including those that prohibit discriminatory employment practices or workplace sexual harassment

Under the current human rights and opportunities laws, "employer" means the state and all its political subdivisions and any person or employer with at least three employees. The bill lowers the number of employees an employer must have to be subject to these laws to one or more instead of three or more.

In doing so, it subjects employers with one or two employees to the antidiscrimination laws under the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) statutes, including those that prohibit (1) discriminatory employment practices (such as those described under § 10 below) and (2) workplace sexual harassment. These laws also impose certain duties on the employer, such as the duty to provide reasonable accommodation to an employee who is pregnant, unless doing so would be an undue hardship.

Under the bill, employers with one or two employees are no longer exempt from liability for employment discrimination based on any of the protected classes. The bill gives an employee claiming to be aggrieved by an employer's alleged discriminatory practice the right to file a complaint with CHRO, as is the case under existing law for employees of employers with three or more employees.

Existing law requires employers with three or more employees to post certain notices and provide training and education on the illegality of workplace sexual harassment. The bill generally subjects employers with one or two employees to these requirements, but existing law already requires them to provide training and education to their supervisory employees. By law, an employer who fails to post the required notices, or provide the required training and education, must be fined up to \$750.

As under existing law for other size employers, under the bill, if an employee of an employer with one or two employees refuses or threatens to refuse to comply with the employment discrimination prohibitions, the employer may file a written complaint under oath asking CHRO for assistance by conciliation or other remedial action.

§§ 8 & 9 — DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING AND INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

Requires state agencies, within available appropriations, to provide a one-hour minimum training and education on domestic violence and victim resources; requires employers with three or more employees to post similar information in an accessible location

State Agencies With One or More Employees (§§ 8 & 9)

The bill authorizes CHRO to require that all state agencies provide at least one hour of training and education on domestic violence and the resources available to victims. The training must be given to employees hired:

1. before January 1, 2023, by July 1, 2023, and
2. on or after January 1, 2023, within six months after their date of hire.

Under the bill, this training and education for state employees must be done within available appropriations using CHRO's training and education materials (see below). It must include information on:

1. domestic violence, abuser, and victim behaviors;
2. how domestic violence may impact the workplace; and

3. the resources available to victims.

The bill requires CHRO, in conjunction with domestic violence victim advocacy organizations, to develop:

1. a link with information on domestic violence and available resources for victims and include it on the commission's website and
2. an online training and education video or other interactive method of training and education that meets the requirements above and make them available to each state agency at no cost.

Employers With Three or More Employees (§ 8)

The bill also empowers CHRO to require employers with three or more employees to post, in a prominent and accessible location, information on domestic violence and the resources available to such victims in Connecticut.

§§ 10-12 — WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Broadens the definition of "sexual harassment" to include conduct that interferes, not just substantially interferes, with a person's work performance and that otherwise meets the definition; applies the workplace sexual harassment provisions to elected or appointed officials

Under existing law, sexual harassment in the employment context is any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or conduct of a sexual nature in certain circumstances.

The bill broadens the definition under one of these circumstances. It does so by eliminating the current condition that conduct must substantially interfere with a person's work performance. Instead, it classifies as sexual harassment conduct that interferes with work performance and otherwise meets the definition of sexual harassment.

This change applies to laws that prohibit (1) sexual harassment as a form of employment discrimination under the CHRO statutes, (2) higher education institution employees or agents from sexually harassing students, and (3) employers or agents from sexually harassing interns. (For higher education students, the conduct must interfere with

academic performance, not work performance.)

As under existing law, employment sexual harassment also includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. submission is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment;
2. submission or rejection is the basis for employment decisions affecting the person; or
3. the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Similar provisions apply for higher education students and interns (for students, the inquiry focuses on terms affecting their academic success or the basis for education decisions, rather than employment).

The bill also extends to elected or appointed officials the prohibition of sexual harassment as a form of employment discrimination under the CHRO statutes. This applies to these officials of a municipality, board, commission, counsel, or other governmental body.

§§ 10 & 13-23 — FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS AS A PROTECTED CLASS UNDER ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of someone's status as a family violence victim in employment, public accommodations, housing, the granting of credit, and other laws over which the CHRO has jurisdiction; authorizes such a victim aggrieved by an alleged discriminatory practice to file discrimination complaints with CHRO

The bill prohibits various forms of discrimination based on someone's status as a family violence victim, such as in employment, public accommodations, housing sales or rentals, granting credit, and several other areas. In several cases, it classifies discrimination on this basis as a "discriminatory practice" under the CHRO laws. By doing so, the act allows individuals aggrieved by these violations, or CHRO itself, to file a complaint with CHRO alleging discrimination.

(The bill does not define "family violence" under the anti-discrimination laws, except for under employment discrimination (§

10)).

General Anti-Discriminatory Provision and Deprivation of Rights (§ 13)

Under existing law, it is a discriminatory practice to deprive someone of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by Connecticut or federal laws or constitutions, or cause such a deprivation, because of religion, national origin, alienage, color, race, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, blindness, mental or physical disability, or status as a veteran. The bill adds status as a family violence victim to this list.

Under existing law, it is a crime to place a noose or simulation of one on public property, or on private property without the written consent of the owner, and with the intent to harass someone because of any protected class listed above. The bill adds “family violence victim” to the list of protected classes.

By law, violation of these provisions is generally a class A misdemeanor but if the violation results in property damage above \$1,000, it is a class D felony. In either case, there is a minimum \$1,000 fine unless the court states on the record its reasons for reducing it. A class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to 364 days in prison; a class D felony is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Employment Discrimination (§ 10)

For the bill’s discriminatory employment practices provisions, “family violence” is an incident resulting in physical harm, bodily injury or assault, or an act of threatened violence that constitutes fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, or assault, including stalking or a pattern of threatening, between family or household members. Verbal abuse or argument is not family violence unless there is present danger and the likelihood that physical violence will occur.

The bill prohibits an employer or employer’s agent, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification or need, from refusing to hire or employ someone; barring or discharging someone from employment; or discriminating against someone in pay or in employment terms,

conditions, or privileges because the person is a family violence victim. This prohibition applies to all employers, public or private, and all employees except those employed by their parents, spouse, or children.

The bill also prohibits the following kinds of employment discrimination based on family violence victim status:

1. employers refusing to provide a reasonable accommodation to an employee whom the employer knows is a victim of family violence, unless the absence would cause an undue hardship (see below);
2. employment agencies failing or refusing to classify properly or refer for employment or otherwise discriminating against someone except in the case of a bona fide occupational qualification or need;
3. labor organizations excluding someone from full membership rights, expelling a member, or discriminating in any way against a member, employer, or employee, unless the action is due to a bona fide occupational qualification;
4. employers, employment agencies, labor organizations, or anyone else taking adverse action against someone because he or she opposed a discriminatory employment practice, brought a complaint, or testified or assisted someone else in a complaint proceeding;
5. any person aiding, abetting, inciting, compelling, or coercing someone to commit a discriminatory employment practice or attempting to do so; and
6. employers, employment agencies, labor organizations, or anyone else advertising employment opportunities in a way that restricts employment and thus discriminates, except for a bona fide occupational qualification or need.

Reasonable Accommodation. Under the bill, it is a discriminatory practice for an employer to refuse to provide a reasonable

accommodation to an employee whom the employer knows to be a family violence victim, unless it would cause the employer an undue hardship. Under existing law, examples of reasonable accommodations are more frequent or longer breaks, job restructuring, modified work schedules, or temporary transfers to less strenuous or hazardous work. Undue hardship for an employer is an action requiring significant difficulty or expense, when considered in light of certain factors (e.g., the accommodation's nature and cost and the employer's overall financial resources).

Under the bill, an employee who is a family violence victim may seek a reasonable accommodation to do any of the following related to the violence:

1. seek attention for the employee's or a child's injuries, as long the employee is not the perpetrator against the child;
2. obtain services from a family violence shelter, program, or rape crisis center;
3. obtain psychological counseling, including for a child as long as the employee is not the perpetrator against the child;
4. participate in safety planning and other actions to increase safety from future incidents, including temporary or permanent relocation; or
5. obtain legal services, assist in the offense's prosecution, or otherwise participate in related legal proceedings.

Under the bill, the employer may require the employee to charge this time off against any available leave with pay ordinarily granted, unless a collective bargaining agreement or existing employee handbook or policy provides otherwise. If the absence cannot be classified in this way, it may be treated as leave without pay.

The bill requires an employee who is absent from work under these circumstances to provide a certification to the employer, upon request, within a reasonable time after the absence. The certification must be one

of the following:

1. a police report indicating that the employee or the employee's child was a family violence victim,
2. a court order protecting or separating the employee or employee's child from the perpetrator,
3. other evidence from the court or prosecutor that the employee appeared in court, or
4. documentation from a medical professional or a domestic violence counselor that the employee or child was undergoing counseling or treatment for physical or mental injuries or abuse resulting in victimization from family violence.

Under the bill, if an employee has a physical or mental disability resulting from a family violence incident, the employee must be treated the same as employees with other disabilities under existing law prohibiting disability-based employment discrimination.

The bill also requires employers, to the extent allowed by law, to maintain the confidentiality of any information regarding an employee's status as a family violence victim.

Public Accommodations (§ 15)

The bill prohibits anyone from denying someone, based on his or her status as a family violence victim, full and equal accommodations in any public establishment (i.e., one that caters to or offers its services, facilities, or goods to the general public), including any commercial property or building lot on which a commercial building will be built or offered for sale or rent, subject to lawful conditions and limitations that apply alike to everyone. It further prohibits discriminating, segregating, or separating people based on their family violence victim status. Violations are punishable as a class D misdemeanor, subject to a fine of up to \$250, up to 30 days' imprisonment, or both.

Housing (§ 16)

The bill prohibits anyone from refusing to sell or rent after a person makes a bona fide offer; or refusing to negotiate for the sale or rental of a dwelling; or otherwise denying or making a dwelling unavailable to someone based on their status as a family violence victim.

A violation is a class D misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in prison, a fine of up to \$250, or both.

This prohibition does not apply to either of the following if the owner maintains his or her residence there: (1) renting a room or rooms in a single-family home or (2) a unit in a two-family home.

Credit (§ 17)

The bill prohibits a creditor from discriminating against an adult in a credit transaction based on the person's status as a domestic violence victim.

Other Areas Subject to CHRO's Jurisdiction (§§ 14 & 18-23)

The bill authorizes CHRO to investigate claims of discrimination based on a person's status as a family violence victim under other laws over which CHRO has jurisdiction. The bill:

1. subjects any professional or trade association, board, or other similar organization whose profession, trade, or occupation requires a state license, to a fine of \$100 to \$500 for denying someone membership because of his or her status as a family violence victim (§ 14);
2. requires state officials and supervisory personnel to recruit, appoint, assign, train, evaluate, and promote state personnel on the basis of merit and qualifications, without regard to their status as a family violence victim (§ 18);
3. requires state agency services to be performed without discrimination based on a person's status as a family violence victim (§ 19);

4. requires any state agency that provides employment referrals or placement services to public or private employers to reject any job request that indicates an intention to exclude anyone based on his or her status as a family violence victim (§ 20);
5. prohibits state departments, boards, or agencies from granting, denying, or revoking a person’s license or charter on the grounds that he or she is a family violence victim (§ 21);
6. requires all educational, counseling, and vocational guidance programs and all apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs of state agencies, or in which they participate, to be open to all qualified people, without regard to family violence victim status (§ 22); and
7. prohibits a person’s status as a family violence victim from being considered as a limiting factor in state-administered programs involving the distribution of funds to qualify applicants for benefits authorized by law; and prohibits the state from giving financial assistance to public agencies, private institutions, or other organizations which discriminate on this basis (§ 23).

§ 10 — EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION GENERALLY

Extends applicable provisions of the state’s employment discrimination laws to elected and appointed officials; prohibits someone from asserting, as a defense to an employment discrimination complaint, that the conduct was not severe or pervasive; provides a reasonable person standard as an affirmative defense; and prohibits certain settlements or agreements between an employer and an employee that impose certain restrictions on the employee

Extension to Election or Appointed Officials (§ 10(a))

The bill makes the elected or appointed officials of a municipality, board, commission, counsel, or other governmental body “employees” covered by the state’s employment discrimination laws. Thus, it extends to them the laws on, among other things, sexual harassment (see above) and required accommodations for pregnant employees.

General Considerations (§ 10(e))

The bill prohibits someone from asserting, as a defense to an employment discrimination complaint, that the conduct was not severe

or pervasive. The bill specifies that it is an unlawful discriminatory practice to subject someone to inferior employment terms, conditions, or privileges because of the person's protected characteristic.

Under the bill, a person's failure to make a discrimination complaint about the discrimination is not determinative of the liability of the applicable entity (i.e., the employer, licensing or employment agency, or labor organization).

The bill also provides for an affirmative defense that the harassing conduct complained about does not rise above the level of what a reasonable person would consider discrimination. By law, a party has the burden of establishing an affirmative defense by a preponderance of the evidence.

Impermissible Settlement or Agreement Terms (§ 10(f), (g))

The bill prohibits settlements or agreements resolving discrimination complaints between employers and current or past employees or job applicants from:

1. restricting the employee's or applicant's right to later work for the employer or employer's parent company, subsidiary, division, affiliate, or contractor; or
2. including a non-disparagement or non-disclosure provision for the employee as a condition for employment or continued employment, promotion, compensation, or benefit or as a condition for resolving or investigating a discrimination complaint.

The bill also prohibits settlements or agreements between employers and current or past employees from restricting the employee from (1) filing a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, CHRO, or in state or federal court or (2) testifying or otherwise participating in a state or federal agency discrimination-related claim or otherwise pursuing his or her rights under state or federal discrimination laws.

§ 24 — AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN PUBLIC CONTRACTS

Requires contractors awarded public projects to take affirmative action to ensure that applicants and employees are treated without regard to status as a family violence victim

The bill generally requires state agency, municipal public works, and quasi-public agency project contracts to require the contractors to agree to take affirmative action to ensure that applicants with job-related qualifications are employed and that employees are treated without regard to their status as a family violence victim.

§ 25 — CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH COALITIONS

Requires that state higher education institutions' mental health coalition members be educated in protocols and techniques developed with consideration also given to a student's status as a family violence victim

By law, each higher education institution in Connecticut, excluding Charter Oak State College or online-only institutions, must establish a mental health coalition with representatives from each of its campuses to assess the institution's mental health services and programs. Under the law, each institution's president must appoint individuals to the coalition from each campus that reflect the institution's student body demographics.

Existing law requires these institutions to ensure that coalition members are educated on, among other things, the protocols and techniques to respond to student mental illness that have been developed with consideration given to the students' race, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, socio-economic status, or status as a veteran or service member of the U.S. armed forces. Under the bill, the protocols and techniques must be developed with consideration also given to the students' status as a family violence victim.

§§ 26 & 27 — DSS APPROPRIATIONS

Appropriates \$1.44 million from the General Fund to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for domestic violence child and family advocates at domestic violence agencies

For FY 23, the bill appropriates \$1,440,000 from the General Fund to DSS for domestic violence child and family advocates at domestic violence agencies that provide trauma-informed services to children and families experiencing domestic violence.

Under the bill, a “domestic violence agency” is any office, shelter, host home, or agency helping domestic violence victims through crisis intervention, emergency shelter referral, and medical and legal advocacy, that also meets DSS’s service provision criteria.

“Trauma-informed services” are services directed by a thorough understanding of the neurological, biological, psychological, and social effects of trauma and violence on someone.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 36 Nay 3 (03/31/2022)