

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5232

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICE ANIMALS.

Vote Date: 3/8/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/1/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Committee Bill No. 5232 aligns state statutes concerning service animals with federal law. Previous legislation concerning service animals do not specify the distinct differences between service animals, emotional support animals, and therapy animals. The classification of service animals is used interchangeably with these three terms and is often muddled in definition. Because this bill would replace various references with the federal definition of 'service animal', the applicability of protections and provisions related to these animals would broaden for both the owners and trainers. This in turn ensures that disabled citizens with service animals are unimpeded when at work and within public spaces.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Proposed Substitute Bill No. 5232 changes the effective date to effective upon passage.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity:

The CWCSEO voiced support for the Committee Bill No. 5232, as it will bring state laws concerning service animals to align with federal ADA laws, provide education on the differentiation of Service animals, emotional support animals, & therapy animals, and inform the rights of service animal owners in public places and establishments.

William DeMaio, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, Town of Newington:

Mr. DeMaio voiced support for Committee Bill No. 5232, as it will bring State laws concerning service animals in compliance with federal ADA laws, giving more people with disabilities, as well as service animal trainers, access to public spaces when accompanied by service animals. Further increasing the quality of life for disabled citizens throughout CT.

Kathleen Flaherty, ESQ., Executive Director, CT Legal Rights Project, Inc.:

Ms. Flaherty voiced support for the Committee Bill No. 5232, as it will continue the work of a previous working group, of which the speaker is one of, that was convened to examine CT laws regarding service animals.

Stacey Ober, Legislative Analyst, American Kennel Club:

Ms. Stacey voiced support for the Committee Bill No. 5232, as it causes state laws to align with federal laws regarding service animals, as well as raise overall awareness about the rights and responsibilities of service animal owners.

Dianne Stone, Representative, ADA coalition of Connecticut:

Ms. Stone voiced support for the Committee Bill No. 5232, as it will bring state laws concerning service animals to align with federal ADA laws, thus providing education on the differentiation of Service animals, emotional support animals, and therapy animals, and informing the rights and responsibilities of service animal owners.

Kate Wall, President, Connecticut Town Clerks Association:

Ms. Wall voiced support for the Committee Bill No. 5232 but recommends that the effective date be changed to "Upon Passage", thus ensuring that all owners of service animals will benefit from the legislation without incurring additional fees towards owners who license their animals before July 1st. This recommendation is in Proposed Substitute Bill No. 5232.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None

Reported by: Ben McSheehy

Date: 03/15/2022