

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5346

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO FUND SOCIAL WORKERS IN

Title: EMERGENCY SHELTERS.

Vote Date: 3/15/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/10/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Aimee Berger-Girvalo, 111th Dist.
Rep. Christine Palm, 36th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

There has been a shortage in service providers at emergency shelters and similar organizations, and this has been especially acute during the pandemic. This legislation will work to solve that issue by creating a pilot program that will assess the unmet needs for on-site social worker services in emergency shelters and aid enable these shelters to recruit and retain social workers.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Jason Rojas](#), House Majority Leader **Support** – stating that emergency shelters have been a vital part of CT's emergency response system, but that funding for these shelters has not kept pace with the rising cost of living. Social workers can expedite services for individuals and families and help them apply for temporary and long-term housing.

[Kathleen Flaherty](#), Executive Director-CT Legal Rights Project, Inc. **Support** – stating that "This bill recognizes the incredible need for mental health services among people whose housing is unstable. I encourage this committee to advance the bill and listen to the people

on the front lines – the people who currently work at emergency shelters and other front line mental health staff – about how best to improve this pilot program."

[Stephen Wanczyk](#), Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers LMSW

Support – stating that social workers are in unique position to be able to help homeless individuals and families connect with services to get them the physical and mental healthcare that they may need. They also asked that the program be funded by designating federal relief funds for the pilot program, rather than leaving it at "available appropriations".

[William Knoegel](#) The National Association of Social Workers, L.C.S.W. **Support** – stating that "Embedding Social Workers in shelters can expedite services for individuals and families. Social Workers can make referrals and aid the individuals/families with the maze of applying for temporary and long term housing. They can aid these people in crisis for appropriate mental health/addictions services. They can refer their clients to appropriate medical and dental services."

The following are licensed therapists who testified in support of HB 5346.

[Briana Hansen](#), LMFT

[Kristina Chomick](#),

[Michele Nardella](#),

[Jaime Rodriguez](#), LMFT-CTAMFT

[Rebecca Ruitto](#), Chair-CTAMFT

[Kiley Gosselin](#), Executive Director-Partnership for Strong Communities Neither supports or opposes, stating that they support efforts to bolster services in emergency shelters they think that this should be done through the "Reaching Home Campaign" to fund existing nonprofit service contracts rather than through the creation of a new pilot program.

[Evonne Klein](#), CEO-Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness Neither supports or opposes, stating that while they support the intention of the bill that this should be done by adequately funding existing nonprofit contracts through DOH and DMHAS, rather than creating a new pilot program

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

Reported by: William Cromwell

Date: 3/24/2022