

Appropriations Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5436

AN ACT CONCERNING LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT AND APPROVAL FOR
Title: THE EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID LITIGATION SETTLEMENT FUNDS.

Vote Date: 4/7/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/25/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Appropriations Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill requires the Office of Policy and Management to submit recommendations to the General Assembly for approval of allocations of Opioid Settlement funds by the Appropriations and Public Health Committees. This bill intends to implement legislative oversight for the expenditure of these funds to support the coordinated effort to dispense in the most effective use to strengthen behavioral health services, many of which have been in crisis due the combination of underfunding, workforce shortage, and an increase demand in services as people begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent effects it has had on the people of Connecticut.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Nancy Navarretta](#), Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) – Commissioner Navarretta submitted testimony respectfully requesting that the committee support HB 5044, An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding The Use Of Opioid Litigation Proceeds, in lieu of passage of the committee's bill. She attests that HB 5044 accomplishes the intent of HB 5436 but was developed in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General (AG), so it codifies the specific requirements of the negotiated settlement agreements. The Commissioner argues that the alternate bill, HB 5044, establishes an Opioid Settlement Advisory Council with membership that includes the president pro tempore of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the majority leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives and the minority leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives, or their designees. She clarifies that HB 5044 also requires the report to be submitted before the joint standing

committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health and appropriations, accomplishing the same goals as HB 5436.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Gian-Carl Casa, President & CEO, The Alliance – Mr. Casa submitted testimony supporting the submission of plans for the use of opioid litigation settlement funds to be reviewed by the Appropriations and Public Health. He explains that through use of the legislative process to properly evaluate the use of the expenditure of these funds, and which will provide a public forum for comments from behavioral health professionals and people with lived experiences with addiction or are in recovery. He states that by doing so, the necessary input from the people doing the respective work in the field and those who have had lived experiences will be effectively heard and taken into consideration in the spending of the settlement.

Luke Bronin, Mayor, City of Hartford – Mayor Bronin testified commending the intent of these bills to provide greater transparency for the expenditure of settlement funds. However, the Mayor also believes that it is vital that there be strong municipal representation and input in all planning proposals. He explains that initiatives to reduce opioid overdoses are often coordinated at the local level, and the costs and consequences of the opioid epidemic are felt most directly at the local level. With that said, he respectfully requests that any legislation seeking to determine appropriate expenditure of Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds include municipal leadership and representation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) – CCM has concerns with HB 5436 as it would run contrary to the settlement agreement, which requires the state to convene an advisory committee that is equally comprised of state and municipal officials to develop recommendations for the allocation of these funds. It is CCM's belief that this proposal may impose barriers towards appropriately allocating these funds in accordance with the settlement and therefore possibly inhibit funding from being received. CMM does, however, support HB 5044, favorably reported out of the Public Health Committee, as it would create an advisory committee responsible to address the opioid crisis and develop a mechanism to allocate a majority of the opioid settlement proceeds. Additionally, CCM explains HB 5044 would create a 32-member advisory board, with 16 members representing municipalities and the other 16 representing the state and that they would be responsible for creating proposals to address opioid prevention, treatment and recovery strategies, in addition to having the authority to allocate the funding to implement their plans. With this explanation, CCM encourages the committee to take no action on HB 5436.

Reported by: Taylor Hyde

Date: April 20, 2022