

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5452

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE CONCERNING THE ACCESSIBILITY

Title: OF STATE AGENCY INTERNET WEB SITES.

Vote Date: 3/29/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/18/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would, on passage, establish a task force to study the accessibility of state agency internet web sites. It would be required to submit its report no later than January 1, 2023.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Ms. Michelle Gilman, Commissioner, Dept of Administrative Services: They support the goal of this bill, but they don't believe it is necessary because work is already being done by their agency.

Ms. Amy Porter, Commissioner, Dept. of Aging and Disability Services: They support full accessibility in website design, operation, and usability. They point out that people with disabilities often experience a wide range of barriers that prohibit access. A web site may use sound to convey information or video without closed captioning which is inaccessible to people who are deaf or blind. These web sites prevent a large part of our state's population from having full access to digital information.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Ms. Laura Hoch, Senior Manager of Advocacy, National Multiple Sclerosis Society: They support this proposal because of the barriers that many living with MS face. It is critical that websites for state agencies are accessible. Issues from MS with vision, mobility, dexterity, cognition and more can impact a person's ability to navigate the virtual world. They hope that the studies proposed in this bill can be implemented so the state might take steps toward making our virtual world easier to navigate for all our state's residents.

Ms. Ellen Telker, President, American Council of the Blind, Connecticut: She offered testimony in support of this legislation. In fact, she submitted this testimony as an e-mail because she was unable to complete the form to register to testify at the hearing. She was unable to find a sighted person to help her complete the form. She would like the bill to go forward.

Mr. Adam Saucier, Constituent: He submitted testimony in favor of this bill. He is happy to hear that the Bureau of Informational Technology Services is working on this. He hopes that they do not plan to simply use an accessibility overlay as a quick fix. He believes that a state law in the future will require that all government agency websites be accessible.

Ms. Elizabeth Doane, Constituent: She is in support of this proposal. She is a totally blind professor of mathematics and computer science who uses software to get information, display graphical content, fill out forms, and perform all duties usually executed by academic professionals. They use software called a screen reader. They never use the mouse itself. All information is accessed through the keyboard. It means that links need meaningful labels, buttons need to be coded in such a way that the screen reader sees it. Images need tags so the user knows what is being shown. In case of something complex, images need full descriptions. Forms need to be coded so that a user can fill them out without assistance. She strongly urges the committee to support this bill and move toward improving the opportunities for all disabled people.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Mr. David Godbout, Constituent: He opposed all the bills put forward by the committee under the claim of nullification.

Reported by: Richard Ferrari

Date:3/29/22