

# Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-283

AN ACT ELIMINATING INCOME AND ASSET LIMITS FOR THE MED-

**Title:** CONNECT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

**Vote Date:** 3/24/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/8/2022

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Human Services Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The reason for S.B. 283 is to get rid of income and asset limits that prevent working people with disabilities to qualify for Medicaid. This legislation also requires the Department of Social Services to post regulation on the eRegulations System rather than in the Connecticut Law Journal.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The substitute language for this bill adds a section increasing HUSKY C asset limits from \$1,600 to \$5,000 for individuals; \$2,400 to \$7,500 for couples; and increases HUSKY C income eligibility to 138 percent federal poverty level from a percentage of TANF regional payment standards. This increase in asset limits will serve to make Medicaid easier to attain, ensuring that disabled workers do not have to surrender their ability to work to live a comfortable, material life.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Commissioner of Department of Social Services, Deidre Gifford**, appreciates the intent of the bill but is concerned that any savings that come with administrative efficiencies would not be enough to offset the costs of increased enrollment. DSS is also concerned that the expansion of eligibility without a limit on income or assets is likely to encourage individuals currently covered through employers and private insurance to move to Medicaid due to its broader coverage and lower cost sharing.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**President Pro Tempore, Senator Martin M. Looney**, supports the bill. Looney believes that this act will allow disabled individuals to access the health care services and support they need, without having to choose between working and qualifying for Medicaid. The asset limit of \$10,000 seems unrealistically low for today's economy and raising or eliminating it would increase the number of insured residents.

**Community and Affiliates Relations Manager of NAMI Connecticut, Thomas Burr**, supports the bill with proposed changes. NAMI CT recommends that the committee bill to include raising the HUSKY C income limit to equal 138% of the Federal Poverty level, and asset limits to \$5,000 to \$7,500.

**Black and Brown United In Action** supports the bill because they are committed to the empowerment of Black and Brown communities which are historically overworked and underpaid, and centering intersectional identities is the most effective way to uplift the most marginalized members of society, resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences, and engage collective action.

**Healthcare Advocate for the State of Connecticut, Ted Doolittle**, supports the bill, stating that the limits in place deprive enrollees of the ability to accumulate savings which can enable them to improve their material conditions.

**Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, Inc., Win Evarts**, supports the bill. In addition to raising the income limit of HUSKY C, they also recommend moving the HUSKY C income limit closer to the Med-Connect minimum income to facilitate a less stressful employment trajectory for individuals with disability.

**Executive Director of CT Legal Rights Project Inc., Kathleen Flaherty**, supports the bill with a suggested amendment to increase the income and asset limits for HUSKY C.

**Chief Advocate at the Center For Disability Rights, Marc Anthony Gallucci**, supports the bill. The limits were set in the 1970s and never increased, leaving disabled people too impoverished to get institutional care.

**Office Administrator for Keep the Promise Coalition, Holly Hackett**, supports the bill with the recommendation of increasing the asset and income limits of HUSKY C.

**Litigation Attorney at Disability Rights CT, Sheldon Toubman**, supports the bill but highlights what is missing. There is no relief for people on HUSKY C for people who are 65 or older who are disabled under the same standard but not able to work. Elderly and disabled individuals who cannot work still would be treated unfavorably than other groups in terms of eligibility rules, but it would start to address the great injustice that exists.

**Disability Advocate of Independence Unlimited, Susan Salters**, supports the bill. Eliminating the limits for this program would help her son save to make a down-payment on a house and remain in the workforce, making the American Dream possible.

**Policy Advocate from Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Alison Weir**, supports the bill. She requests the committee expand the income eligibility and asset limits for HUSKY C because for disabled people to meet the asset limits, they must reduce their standard of living, erasing much of the benefit they gained from working.

**Resident of Hartford, CT, Karen Healy**, supports this bill because it would help people like her who want to work but don't want those limits to prevent them from growing financially and saving for emergencies.

**Resident of Windsor, CT, Keith Mullinar**, supports this bill because the restriction makes it impossible to "set aside" funds to cover occasional expenses such as annual property taxes and insurance policies.

**Resident of Waterbury, CT, David Gedraitis**, supports this bill because medical bills are high, it is difficult to get coverage, and the income limit needs to be higher because it disproportionately affects people on fixed income.

**East Haven Resident, Richard Famiglietti**, supports this bill. He is a person working with a spinal cord injury that rendered him a quadriplegic. He highlights the removal of income limits but also recognizes that some income limits are too low and punishes people who cannot work due to their disability.

**Joseph J. Cintia of Waterbury, Connecticut**, supports the bill. As stated in the testimony, there should not be a penalty on people who have earned income and gained assets from receiving the care they so desperately need. He believes that we should all try to help those that help themselves.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Molly Lukiwsky**

**Date: 3/24/2022**