

Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-407

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A
POST-COVID-19 WOMEN'S RETURN TO WORK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Title: PLAN.

Vote Date: 3/22/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/15/2022

File No.: 251

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Commerce Committee
Rep. John K. Hampton, 16th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to address the severe deficit of women in the workforce as a result of COVID-19 which the National Women's Law Center reports led to 1.1 million women who left the labor force, accounting for approximately 63% of lost jobs.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Representative Kate Farrar, House of Representatives, State of Connecticut:

The Representative of the 20th district testified that while the women of Connecticut were disproportionately affected by lost jobs in the pandemic, this issue is compounded by the pre-existing issue of the wage gap between men and women. One of the contributing factors to the wage gap is occupational segregation - with women in the majority of low-wage jobs. There is an opportunity as we emerge from this crisis to support women to pursue not just returning to the workforce, but to enter many of the high-wage, high-growth careers in our state." "This bill seeks to develop a plan to pursue strategies to get women into these high-wage, high-growth careers." She concludes that these plans are only a starting place and that to engage more women in the state's workforce, access to affordable and reliable child care is a necessity.

Madeline Granato, Policy Director & Brandi A. Kennedy, MSW Policy Intern, Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF):

The representatives of the Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund testified in support of the bill the same issues as in other testimonies of women, especially those of color, disproportionately represent the number of CT residents who have become jobless since the start of the pandemic. They added that not only would “providing women solutions to the barriers that keep them out of the workforce” help those women and their families, but it will also greatly “assist in advancing Connecticut’s economic growth. If even just 1-3% of mothers to children under the age of 18 leave the labor force permanently, Connecticut could see a loss of between \$150 and \$500 million in annual wages for one year alone - numbers that could be a lot higher when accounting for lost income or sales tax revenue.”

Ashley Zane, Government Affairs Associate, Connecticut Business and Industry

Association: Ms. Zane testified that CBIA supports establishing partnerships with childcare and transit providers because the pandemic worsened the divide for women with children, but reliable transportation and childcare could help their return to the workforce. She also noted CBIA’s strong support of the bill’s “focus on high-growth industries and placing women in careers, not just jobs. This bill fosters return to work initiatives, paid internships, career fairs, and professional mentorships which are important workforce tools. Connecticut continues to face looming workforce deficits in areas like life sciences, allied health, manufacturing, and IT. Our state cannot afford to have people forced to the sidelines because of access to important development tools like internships and professional counseling.”

Garrett Sheehan, President & CEO, Greater New Haven & Quinnipiac Chambers of

Commerce: Mr. Sheehan testified that the chambers support SB407 because “every effort needs to be made to address workforce shortages that exist at nearly every level of our economy. A post-COVID19 Women’s Return to Work Economic Development Plan would help fill our open jobs and strengthen our workforce. The collaboration between the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, the Office of Workforce Strategy and regional workforce development boards will be key in addressing the reasons why people are not returning to work.”

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Hillary Desideraggio

Date: March 31, 2022