

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-447

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF CRIMINAL LAWS OF THIS STATE.

Vote Date: 3/31/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/25/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

Co-Sponsors:

Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.

Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, 105th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill creates a working group to study the criminal laws of Connecticut. The study shall include, at a minimum, a review of titles 53 and 53a of the general statutes for the purpose of recommending legislative changes. The group will include members who have expertise in criminal law. Membership will consist of (1) one appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives; (2) one appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate; (3) one appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives; (4) one appointed by the majority leader of the Senate; (5) one appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives; and (6) one appointed by the minority leader of the Senate. This group is to submit its findings and recommendations not later than January 1, 2023.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

State of Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services, Office of Chief Public Defender, Legal Counsel, Deborah Del Prete Sullivan

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports the bill. They request that the Chief Public Defender be added to the membership of the group as they carry out their charge to study the criminal laws of the state. OCPD also requests that the committee consider the inclusion of the Division of Criminal Justice in the group. Having substantial experience in the Connecticut courts, OCPD has a unique perspective on the criminal justice system, the penal code, and criminal law in the state. Due to this, they request to be included in any group participating in the study prescribed by this legislation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut, Policy Counsel, Jess Zaccagnino

Jess Zaccagnino, on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT), supports the bill. The ACLU-CT believes that one reason that mass incarceration has proliferated over the last forty years is that there are more criminal laws on the books criminalizing a wider variety of acts than there has ever been criminalized before. This bill aids in ensuring that our criminal law and procedure statutes are kept modern and reflect our current societal values. They ask that the Committee consider amending the language of the bill to ensure that formerly incarcerated people are represented in the bodies that will be conducting reviews.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Violent Crime Survivors, Co-Founder, Michele Voigt

Ms. Voigt, the Co-Founder of Violent Crime Survivors, opposes the bill. While they support the premise of establishing a working group to study the laws of criminal procedure of this state, they do not think that criminal law should be partisan. With the current makeup of the legislature, four members of the Democratic party are selecting representatives for the working group, while two members of the Republican party are selecting group members. Ms. Voigt stresses that this group should instead be nonpartisan and made up of equal party affiliation. Violent Crime Survivors believes that any working group studying criminal law should be inclusive of those whose criminal law expertise comes from being a victim of a crime.

OTHER:

CT Resident, David Godbout

Mr. Godbout opposed the bill, stating that the virtual committee process constitutes a violation of his Fourth Amendment rights.

Reported by: Luke Tressy

Date: 04/14/2022