

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-477

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PUBLIC HEALTH OF RESIDENTS OF THE

Title: STATE.

Vote Date: 3/30/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/28/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill provides changes to several unrelated areas to advance public health including assisted living services as they relate to dementia care, pregnancy, maternity issues, including birthing hospitals, and the issue of gun violence in our state. Specifically, the bill would institute the following changes to the public health statutes:

- Establishes a 9-member task force to study regulation and staffing levels at assisted living communities pertaining to the dementia special care units and must report its findings and recommendations to the Public Health Committee by January 1, 2023.
- Requires that the Maternal Mortality Review Committee develop educational information on issues that relate to intimate partner violence and pregnant and postpartum women with mental health disorders. This information would then be distributed by the Department of Public Health (DPH) to specific hospitals and health care providers.
- Starting on October 1, 2022, birthing hospitals will be required to provide patients written information on the need for mobility following a caesarean section birth. In addition, starting January 1, 2023, the hospitals must provide postpartum patients with educational materials related to mental health issues. Finally, by January 1, 2023 the hospitals must create a patient portal to allow virtual access to any educational material and information given to the patient during her stay or discharge.
- The bill designates the month of May as "Maternal Mental Health Month" with May 5th being "Maternal Health Day" and allows suitable exercises to be conducted at the Capitol or any other location designated by the Governor.

- To promote the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) "Hear Her" campaign to prevent pregnancy related deaths, this bill would allocate \$250,000 in FY 2023 to specific health care providers and facilities.
- Finally, the bill creates a 21-member Commission on Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention within the Legislative Department. The purpose of the Commission is to develop strategies and programs to reduce gun violence in the state. The Commission would be required to report its activities annually to the Public Health Committee.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Senate Democrats:

The Caucus supports this bill which makes a series of proposals in three specific areas. The first sections of the bill address dementia units in assisted living facilities. While such facilities are for residents who are more independent than those in nursing homes, some of the residents are still particularly vulnerable and it is critical that these facilities are providing sufficient attention and the appropriate care to the special needs of these individuals. Regarding the CDC's "Hear Her" campaign, we support the goals of the campaign to eliminate pregnancy -related deaths by encouraging healthcare professional to truly engage with these patients during and after pregnancy. We appreciate and support the parts of the bill that strengthen and expand educational materials relating to maternal issues and pregnancy. Finally, the bill implements the principal recommendation from the Gun Violence and Intervention and Prevention Advisory Committee (PA 21-35). Gun deaths in Connecticut have risen significantly during the pandemic especially in our cities. Our state prevention efforts have grown but are not consistent statewide. The Advisory Committee strongly advised that gun violence prevention become a permanently coordinated state effort with the appropriate sustained funding. Senate Bill 477 addresses that recommendation by establishing a permanent commission to coordinate the funding and implementation of evidence-based, evidence-informed and community centered programs and strategies to reduce gun violence in state.

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO):

The testimony of the CWCSEO focuses specifically on section 7 of this bill that established the Commission on Gun Violence as it aligns with the recommendations of the former Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Advisory Committee. Although CWCSEO fully supports section 7, they believe that the executive director of the Commission should be staffed with a "Gun Violence Funding Coordinator " to assist the Commission with the powers and duties listed in subsection of the bill. (i) They believe the scope of the executive assistant position must assist the Commission with these critical tasks.

Geraldo Reyes, State Representative, Chair, Black and Puerto Rican Caucus:

Rep. Reyes focuses his testimony on section 7 of the bill. If racism is a public health crisis, so is gun violence because communities of color bear the brunt of the gun violence in Connecticut. Gun violence creates a significant financial toll in Connecticut. An investment is required to ramp up and expand intervention strategies in measurable ways, with miniscule costs and maximum impact. Establishing this Commission is the next step in scaling up our efforts to reduce gun violence in our state.

Luke Bronin, Mayor, City of Hartford:

Mayor Bronin addresses his comments to section 7 of the bill. Although he appreciates the intent of SB 477, he believes HB 5397 provides a more robust and permanent framework for the establishment and implementation of a grant program. While the Commission in SB 477 would hire an executive director, who would serve at the pleasure of the Commission, HB 5397 would establish an Office within DPH. This office at DPH would have a director and designated staff to carry out the responsibilities of the office including the grant award program. Mayor Bronin believes that HB5397 creates a more permanent structure that would better ensure success and longevity for this important work.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):

CHA references three bills that provide different approaches to addressing gun violence: Section 7 of SB 477, HB 5397, and Section 33 of SB16. CHA urges the Committee to consider the following factors when deciding among these three approaches to gun violence. CHA recommends that the General assembly appoint an advisory board in a manner like adopted in Section 9 of the PA 21-35 passed by the legislature in 2021 with appointments to be made by legislative leaders and include certain agency commissioners or their designees. CHA supports the participation and involvement of the DPH Office of Injury Prevention (OIP) and recommends that the OIP collaborate with hospitals to establish a research repository and develop data dashboards. CHA urges the state to appropriate funds to support community organizations that are providing these prevention services to individuals and their families.

Brendan Campell, MD, Connecticut Children's:

CT Children's supports the bill and recommends that any state gun violence prevention and intervention governing body have a direct linkage and provide funding to an independent, academic research institution such as UConn ARMS. An academic research institution would be able to assist any future gun violence prevention group in analyzing statewide violence data and assess future program outcomes. Result-based accountability will be key to ensuring that the state's investment is effective and impactful.

Callie Gale Heilmann, Bridgeport Generation Now (BPTGen Now):

Ms. Heilmann supports SB 477 as it would enact key recommendations proposed by the Bridgeport Gun Violence Task Force. To effectively address gun violence requires deliberate and sustained resources. These public resources must be coordinated strategically to ensure that stakeholders are involved in the design and execution of the intervention, prevention, and evaluation of this undertaking.

Scot X. Esdaile, State President, NAACP:

For the past 113 years, the NAACP has been in the forefront advocating to eradicate violence in the communities and neighborhoods that we serve. NAACP urges the passage of this bill which encompasses their efforts for over a century.

Hartford HealthCare:

Hartford HealthCare supports this bill including the authorization of Medicaid coverage for hospital-based services that will significantly enhance their current efforts to address the issue of gun violence.

Fatimah Loren Drier, Executive Director, The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI):

An appropriate response to the issue of gun violence requires a central decision-making body to look at the entire state and assess specific needs to provide the most thoughtful use of resources. HAVI believes that this bill provides a mechanism to accomplish this goal. The commission will ensure that prevention efforts and funds are distributed equitably and to the areas with the greatest need.

Charlie Galliher, Resident of Ansonia:

We must direct approaches and resources to issues in communities that are uniquely theirs. This approach puts the resources in the areas most adversely affected. As the crisis in one community abates, then these resources can be redirected to other communities.

Additional Sources of Support Include:

- Newtown Action Alliance
- David Shapiro, MD, Trinity Health of New England
- John Torres, Executive Director, Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders
- Politica CT, Women Supporting Women
- Andrew Woods, Director, Hartford Communities that Care
- Jeremy Stein, Executive Director, CT Against Gun Violence
- Kent Ashworth, volunteer to Hartford Communities That Care
- Roye Anastasio-Bourke, Cochair, CONECT/Do Not Stand by Idly
- Melissa Kane, Chairman of the Board of CT Against Gun Violence
- Terra Volpe, Director of Outreach for CT Against Gun Violence
- Jonathan Perloe, Director, CT Against Gun Violence
- Kendell Coker and Dr. Immacula Cann, Members CT Against Gun Violence
- 33 citizens from across the state submitted testimony in support

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Mag Morelli, President of LeadingAge Connecticut:

Ms. Morelli's testimony focuses on Sections 1 and 2 of the SB 477. Assisted Living communities offer a level of care and services to older adults whose physical or mental health conditions are considered chronic but stable. This model has served the state well over the years and allowed us to provide services in a variety of settings including affordable housing. This model is designed to aid with daily living, but is not intended to be, nor licensed to provide, skilled nursing home care. LeadingAge objects to the proposals in Section 2 because they appear to be ideas taken from the current requirements of the skilled nursing home setting. While we support a review of the current assisted living model, we oppose the concept of layering nursing home regulation on this level of care. Regarding dementia care units, our goal is to provide adults living with this condition to adapt to the changes and challenges of this condition. We ask, that before any changes are made you allow us to engage with the Committee to review the memory care services provided through the assisted living model.

Matt Barrett, President and CEO of the CT Association of Health Care Facilities and CT center for Assisted Living (CAHCF/CCAL):

CAHCF appreciates the efforts of the Committee to improve quality of care for residents with Alzheimer's, dementia, and other ailments, but is concerned that the approach in the bill is not appropriate given the nature of the ALSAs. In his testimony, Mr. Barrett mirrors the comments of Ms. Morelli and adds that many residents are independent with bathing, feeding and medication. In addition, residents with dementia and Alzheimer's are high functioning and do not require assistance with feeding and bathing as proposed in the bill's documentation requirements. Regarding the phrase in the bill "description of overall health", this is an impractical requirement to place on an ALS given that the assisted living model is non-clinical, residential and the residents do not require regular medical care as in a nursing home.

Connecticut Assisted Living Association (CALA):

CALA opposes the bill as written. The language proposed in Section 2 appears to impose requirements of a nursing home on Assisted Living communities DPH is responsible for licensing Assisted Living Services Agencies (ALSAs) and provides appropriate regulatory oversight if sufficient staffing is not being provided. In addition, dementia care units are currently required by statute to disclose staffing ratios and update the disclosures if there are changes. Requiring daily postings is overly burdensome and impractical in the ALS setting where multiple agencies may serve one agency. Regarding documenting meals, these are the responsibility of the Managed Residential Community (MRC). Aides assist in feeding, but they are not responsible for serving meals. CALA is greatly concerned with the proposals in the bill and urges the Committee to take no further action.

The following testimony is focused specifically on Section 7 of SB 477:

Dr. Linda Dalessio, EdD, ACNP, BC, Resident of Wolcott CT:

To say that gun violence is a public health crisis is the height of hypocrisy. Guns do not kill people, criminals with illegal guns kill people. A broken legal system that is too lenient allows the same criminals to commit these acts over and over. A real public health crisis is illegal drugs that are pouring over our borders. We are seeing record numbers of drug overdoses and drug deaths among our youth in numbers far greater than those of gun violence.

Robert Wnek, Resident of Prospect CT:

Strongly urges the Committee to oppose SB 477 and HB 5397. Before any behavior can be changed, the root cause needs to be addressed. Lack of morals, a strong traditional family unit along with a broken criminal justice system are the root of the problem. Both bills are a waste of time and taxpayer dollars and will fail to address the root cause of violence. These approaches may feel good and be politically correct, but will not solve the problem.

Elizabeth Drysdale, Resident of Cheshire CT:

Until the root causes of violence are identified and addressed, the choice of weapon be it a gun, hands, hammer, baseball bat, knife, vehicle, or any other means by which to inflict harm, we will not change the situation. These bills are very expensive smoke screens.

John Edwards, Resident of Thompson CT:

If criminals were held accountable and fully prosecuted for not abiding by the laws already in place, all violence, including violence with a gun, would drop considerably. It makes no sense to keep creating ways to suppress law abiding citizens. The "slap and release" programs currently in place do not work. The system is broken.

Alton and Jill Blodgett, Residents of Lebanon CT:

The Public Health Committee should be looking at the real cause for all violence which is the cycle of children being brought up in a violent culture, in non-nuclear families and without moral and civic instruction by proper role models. No one wants to acknowledge the "gorilla in the room".

Additional Sources of Opposition Include:

- **140 citizens** from across the state submitted testimony stating positions similar to those mentioned above in opposing Section 7 of SB 477

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza

Date: 4/14/22