

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-978
AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF THE COVERED CONNECTICUT
Title: PROGRAM.
Vote Date: 3/7/2023
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations
PH Date: 2/28/2023
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Healthcare access and affordability is consistently a top priority of Connecticut residents, but as the cost of healthcare insurance options continue to rise due to the pandemic and other factors, many Connecticut citizens and families are unable to afford healthcare. This bill would ensure that low-income Connecticut residents have access to healthcare and benefits under the Covered Connecticut program.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Department of Social Services (DSS), Commissioner-Designate, Andrea Barton Reeves; opposes this bill stating that expanding healthcare eligibility would require a significant amount of funding which the state cannot afford, and the funding is not included in the Governor's budget. It is stated the federal approval of the current program has only recently been secured, and the anticipated enrollment is expected to take several years to reach the targeted levels.

Office of Health Strategy, Executive Director, Dr. Deidre Gifford; opposes this bill stating that there are concerns with the unintended consequences that may occur as a result of a significant expansion of the program before it has time to fully establish. It is also stated that there are concerns about the cost of the program and the lack of funding in the Governor's budget.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Hospital Association; supports this bill stating that that Connecticut hospitals continue to meet new challenges posed by the pandemic and record inflation. It is stated this bill would help alleviate some of those financial burdens brought on by inflation through ensuring that more Connecticut residents have access to robust, affordable health insurance.

Health Equity Solutions, Director of Policy, Karen Siegel; supports this bill stating increasing the eligibility limit for Covered CT will increase the likelihood of families staying insured when they lose HUSKY coverage. It is stated expanding the reach of the state's Covered CT program will reduce inequalities in health care coverage and cost experienced by marginalized communities.

Stamford Health, President & CEO, Kathleen Silard; supports this bill stating that this year, thousands of Connecticut residents will lose their Medicaid coverage as the pandemic's continuous coverage provisions will end; this bill will likely help many of these individuals continue to be ensured.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

One person submitted testimony anonymously in opposition of this bill.

Reported by: Riley St. Pierre

Date: 3/13/23