

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1228

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE.

Vote Date: 3/27/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/22/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill addresses health care licensure testing, expansion of the healthcare workforce and various related issues. Specifically, the bill requires that:

- The Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Education (DOE) create a group to study inter-district magnet programs for students interested in health care professions.
- These programs provide pathways for students to graduate with the appropriate credentials to practice in a health care field -including curriculums to prepare students for higher education in pre-medicine and nursing programs.
- DPH study methods to address the shortage of radiologic technologists (RTs), nuclear medicine technologists (NMTs), and respiratory care practitioners (RCPs), and report back to the Public Health Committee by 2/2/2024.
- DPH to provide licensure exams for dental hygienists in both English and Spanish.
- DPH to notify all applicants of the appropriate credentials to indicate that they may be eligible for accommodations according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- DPH to study the feasibility of offering competency testing for various professions in both English and Spanish.
- Requires Aging and Disability Services, in consultation with the Advisory Board for Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf/blind, to evaluate gaps in communication between this community and medical providers.
- Allows dentists to delegate certain tasks to qualified dental assistants who are under the direct supervision of a dentist.
- Requires UCONN School of Dental Medicine to develop a radiation safety competency assessment.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Manisha Juthani, MD., Commissioner, CT Department of Public Health (DPH):

The Commissioner expressed concern with Section 2 of the bill, which requires DPH to develop a plan to address the shortage of RTs, NMTs, and RCPs, noting that the Department lacks the experience and expertise to develop a plan to address this workforce shortage. This would involve hiring a consultant to develop this plan. Regarding Section 3, the Commissioner expressed concern that a Spanish language option for the dental hygienist exam does not currently exist on the national level and a new exam would need to be written. Developing licensing exams requires a level of expertise not currently available in DPH. The Commissioner has similar concerns with Section 5, where DPH only regulates RCPs, and a Spanish language licensure exam does not currently exist.

Melissa Willette, New England Region Liaison, US Department of Defense (DOD):

To address license portability for military personnel, the DOD would like licensure compact language expanded to include more professions. Military personnel live a life of changing locations, and the portability of their licensure is crucial to their livelihood. Recognizing compacts for more professions would ease the burden on military personnel.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Stephanie McGuire, APRN, CT Nurses Association (CTNA):

The CTNA is in general support of the bill but would like to see language added that would allow for independent Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) to act as a collaborator with other APRNs. Also, out of state APRNs should be able to present evidence of out of state work which could count towards Connecticut's experience requirement for independent practice.

Shannon Tighe, Director of Clinical Operations, Bridge Family Center:

Ms. Tighe believes that Connecticut non-profits are facing a post-pandemic workforce crisis and are experiencing a hard time hiring due to the current labor market. While in full support of this bill, Ms. Tighe would like language added that would extend the grace period for licensure of behavioral health clinicians to reduce the loss of services from these clinicians.

Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge, CT:

LeadingAge supports this bill as it is focused on expansion of the health care workforce. The growing pressure to provide direct care staffing levels is a noble effort but without the providers of this care, direct care staffing cannot be achieved. There is no one "silver-bullet-solution" to solve this problem and it will take a comprehensive, statewide and multi-faceted approach to address this problem. LeadingAge strongly supports the proposal to establish an inter-district magnet school program for students interested in the health care professions.

Michele Maggiore, Licensed Professional Counselor, Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA):

CCA strongly supports the language that allows recognition of counseling compacts for Connecticut. The portability of licensure through these compacts will make available additional resources needed to ensure access for a greater number of residents while still maintaining the Connecticut licensure standards and educational requirements.

Others in Support of This Bill:

Scott, Kristie, Vice President of Operations-Rushford
Gerwien, Dan, Director of HR - Quality-Perception Programs-Inc
Evarts, Siobhan, Counseling Program Director-Albertus Magnus College
Chadukiewicz, Jennifer, Chief Strategy Officer-SCADD-Inc
Bigelow, Taylor, Doctor-University of New Haven
Evans Zalewski, Sarah, President-CT Counseling Association

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Society of Radiologic Technologists (CSRT):

The CSRT opposes this bill, particularly Section 1. While the requirement to establish an inter-district magnet school program that provides education and training to students interested in health care professions is a good step, as currently drafted, the pathways listed in this bill would not result in professional credentialing and subsequent employment of students in the medical imaging and radiation therapy profession. CSRT is willing to work with the Committee to develop language that would result in an increase in technicians in these sub-specialty areas.

Bernadette Mele, Department Chair, Clinical Professor and Director, Radiologist Assistant Program, Quinnipiac University:

Ms. Mele agrees that there is a critical need in our state to address the current shortage of radiologic technologists and other allied health professionals, but the current language of Section 1, if enacted, would not provide students an immediate pathway toward certification and/or licensure as a medical imaging or radiation therapy professional. We do support the bill's proposal to establish an inter-district magnet school program to introduce students to the health care profession and prepare them for entry into higher education programs, but the language of this bill must be revised so that the students are not directed into a pathway that does not lead to the desired outcome.

Connecticut Society of Respiratory Care (CTSRC):

CTSRC believes that the workforce shortage in health care is the result of the lack of public knowledge of the profession, the aging workforce, the rising rate of burn-out in our ranks, and the need for a more robust pipeline of students who are interested in the profession. The language in Section 1(2) should be amended as follows: "complete a curriculum designed to prepare such student for higher education in pre-medicine, nursing, and other healthcare professions". By adding the other health care professions, the bill broadens the umbrella for expanding the access to qualified health care professionals.

Others in Opposition to This Bill:

Hughes, Barbara, Licensed Professional Counselor-CT Counseling Association
DeMaio, Daniel, Radiology Director-University of Hartford
AROH, Kim, President-AETNA AMBULANCE AND ASM
Martone, Mark, RT Professor PD of Radiological Technician

Reported by: David Rackliffe

Date: April 5, 2023