

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5129

AN ACT CONCERNING SUBSTANCE-FREE HOUSING ON COLLEGE

Title: CAMPUSES.

Vote Date: 2/29/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/22/2024

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Craig Fishbein, 90th District.

Rep. Mitch Bolinsky, 106th District.

Rep. Gary Turco, 27th District.

Rep. Devin Carney, 23rd District.

Rep. Holly Cheeseman, 37th District.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would require institutions of higher education to provide options for substance-free housing on campus. Living in a safe and supportive environment is one of the biggest advantages to helping students remain sober. substance-free housing would allow them to live in an environment free from the temptation to drink or use drugs, so they have a better chance of remaining sober. It would also offer a supportive environment for students choosing to abstain from drinking or drug use due to health and wellness or religious reasons.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[University of Connecticut, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Policies and Strategic Initiatives, Mona Lucas](#): supports this bill and currently offers a substance-free living community. UConn had designated 20 spaces as substance-free living for 2023-24 and plans on doing the same number of spaces in 2024-25. Students living in the substance-free living community are required to submit an acceptance form to certify their commitment to maintaining the substance-free community.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery, Young People and Family Services](#)

[Manager, Terence Aitken](#): supports this bill stating one of the biggest issues facing students who are recovering from addiction is living in a safe and supportive environment. This bill would make that environment more conducive to the recovery process.

[Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery, Director of Recovery Advocacy, Rebecca](#)

[Allen](#): supports this bill because we are amid the worst drug and alcohol epidemic in recent history. It states that, many times, it is only after a student gets disciplined that any supports are offered to deal with substance misuse. It also states that for students that have a substance use disorder, having substance-free housing can potentially be the difference between life or death.

[Connecticut General Assembly, 23rd Assembly District, Representative Devin Carney](#):

supports this bill stating that Connecticut has seen an uptick in addiction-related issues in the past decade, and with addiction often comes mental health issues or co-occurring disorders. Enacting early prevention-related tactics like this bill gives students a better chance in the future.

[Connecticut General Assembly, 37th Assembly District, Representative Holly Cheeseman](#):

supports this bill because of the links between alcohol abuse and physical harm, criminal behavior, becoming the victim of assault, and participating in unsafe behavior. It states that research shows that the first six weeks of college are when many decisions are made about drinking and its overuse. Living in substance-free housing reduces overall drinking and drug use. Substance-free housing also benefits the institution, with dramatic reductions in destructive student behaviors. Students will be more likely to resist the peer pressure that can present drug and alcohol use as normal college behavior.

[Reiki Healer, Tom Gulpil, and Jane Haneke, and Healer, Divine Kara, and Holistic Healer, Mala Lupa, and Natural Healer, Dev Siddiquo, and Prospective Student, J'Waka Steele](#): support this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Former Board of Regents Representative, Graduate of the Connecticut State Colleges and](#)

[Universities system, John Board](#): opposes this bill stating that they believe it isn't the most effective approach. It states that Connecticut colleges and universities should have autonomy in the development of their housing policies and mandating substance-free housing will limit higher education institutions' flexibility to respond to the preferences of their student bodies. They suggest encouraging and empowering Student Governments to advocate more effectively for substance-free housing in response to student demand. This would let institutions keep their anonymity while empowering students to make positive changes in their community.

Reported by: Patrick Buckley

Date: 3/7/2024