

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5200

AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH CARE ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH

**Title:** A DISABILITY.

**Vote Date:** 3/22/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/6/2024

**File No.:** 402

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Public Health Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill is intended to address healthcare access issues for the persons with disabilities population. The bill requires healthcare facilities with two or more examination rooms to:

1. Utilize medical equipment that complies with technical standards for accessibility, and
2. Ensure that at least one examination room has the necessary size for patients with assistive devices, as well as equipment to assist persons with disabilities in accessing medical diagnostic equipment.

The date for compliance with these provisions is January 1, 2025.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**There was no testimony provided by the Administration or Agency.**

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Win Evarts, Executive Director, The ARC of Central Connecticut (ARC):**

Mr. Evarts believes HB 5200 provides a timeline for constructive change to enable persons with a disability to make reliable appointments with medical professionals where access issues are addressed and medical equipment can accommodate these patients, hopefully improving treatment and medical outcomes.

**Laura Hoch, Associate Vice President, National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS):**

Many patients diagnosed with multiple sclerosis require mobility assistive devices, and yet current accessibility of healthcare facilities and medical equipment is limited. NMSS supports the provision that requires equipment and facilities to be adapted to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, including transfer support from mobility devices, support rails and roll-on scales. NMSS believes the legislature should show the disabled community support on these issues.

**Sheldon Toubman, Esq., Disability Rights CT:**

Attorney Toubman notes that persons with disabilities have a greater need for healthcare services but are the least likely to get them due to access issues. He also notes that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which has been in effect for years, already requires hospitals and healthcare facilities to make reasonable accommodations of their facilities and equipment to allow persons with disabilities to access the needed healthcare services. Recently federal agencies with enforcement power have confirmed they intend to follow the ADA standards, thereby clearing the way for the legislature to pass HB 5200.

**Others in Support:**

Andrew Bate, Citizens 4 Equal Access

Dr. Cindy Miller, CC-A

Mary Ann Langton

Dr. Justin Ellenberg

UConn School of Medicine.

Julia Wilcox, Senior Public policy Advisor, CT Community Non-Profit Alliance

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):**

CHA believes it would be premature to adopt federal rules before they are adopted. Realistically, federal rules changes take years to complete, and anticipating the rules requirements could be costly and unrealistic. Connecticut should not go it alone but should wait for the federal rules to be finalized.

**Dante Britts, MD, President, CT Orthopaedic Society (COS):**

While supporting the need for improved access to healthcare facilities for persons with disabilities, Dr. Britts believes HB 5200 may come into conflict with, or duplicate, federal standards that are in the process of being enacted. There is a risk that the fiscal impact of adapting facilities or making equipment purchases to address access issues may be countered by the federal regulations, and that would be extremely costly.

**Others in Opposition:**

Connecticut State Medical Society

**Reported by: Dave Rackliffe**

**Date: March 27, 2024**