

# Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5210  
AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ELDER JUSTICE UNIT IN THE DIVISION OF  
**Title:** CRIMINAL JUSTICE.  
**Vote Date:** 3/12/2024  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable  
**PH Date:** 2/29/2024  
**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Aging Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill was raised to address concerns surrounding crimes against the elderly. This bill directs the Chief States' Attorney to establish an Elder Justice Unit in the Division of Criminal Justice effective October 1, 2024, that will be for investigating and prosecution of crimes against elderly persons.

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

**Connecticut Aging and Disability Services, Ms. Mairead Painter, State Ling-Term Care Ombudsman:** She provided testimony in **support** of this bill. She has been actively involved in elder justice initiatives and has witnessed firsthand the need for specialized attention to crimes against older adults. By setting up an Elder Justice Unit, we are acknowledging the challenges we face in prosecuting crimes against older adults and underscoring our commitment to their safety and dignity.

**Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity, Mr. Michael Werner, Lead Aging Policy Analyst:** Their testimony was offered in **support** of this proposal. They point out that recent findings of the "Senior Fraud Task Force" recommended that "it would be good to hire new staff to pass on institutional knowledge and training (on senior fraud) before these retiring individuals depart the agency". They believe that new funding be authorized for this endeavor and not mandated within available appropriations. They state that every year an estimated 5 million people are victims of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation with many going unreported. They suggest that a simple solution to this issue

would be to fully fund and staff the Community Ombudsman program, which would allow for corrective actions to bad behaviors.

**Division of Criminal Justice:** They have taken **no position** on this legislation. It is anticipated that staffing levels of an elder justice unit at the Office of the Chief State's Attorney would require, at a minimum, two prosecutors, five inspectors, and one forensic accountant. The Division does not have the appropriated funds necessary to sustain this increase in personnel or to provide the training and expertise they would need in order to perform. Additionally, further discussion, consensus, and inter-agency collaboration regarding the reach and scope of an elder justice unit is required prior to the formation of a unit tasked with a topic that has both civil and criminal ramifications. Their agency is not equipped to do what this bill requires of it.

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

**Law Offices of Scott D. Rosenberg, Mr. Scott Rosenberg:** He wholly **supports** the adoption of this legislation. Since the closure of the elderly services unit of the Chief State's Attorney's Office over a decade ago, there has been a hole in our state's response to the mistreatment of the elderly. In the absence of an investigative unit which has both competencies – investigative power and a victim services mindset – many reported cases can fall through the cracks, going unresolved even when they have been identified. In his testimony he offers an example of a senior who was taken advantage of by a family member.

**AARP Connecticut, Ms. Anna Doroghazi, Associate State Director, Advocacy and Outreach:** She offered testimony in **support** of this bill. Elder abuse takes many forms. It can be financial, physical, psychological, or it can take place at home or in an institutional setting. Her testimony offers an example of abuse that had taken place in 2022 and is still unresolved. In 2022, 2.4 million consumers lost \$8.8 billion to scams and fraud and at least one in ten adults over the age of 60 experience some form of abuse each year, much of it unreported. Creating an Elder Justice Unit is a step towards acknowledging the dynamics of crimes committed against older adults.

**CT statewide Family Council, Mr. Frederic Kaeser, Vice Chairperson:** The testimony submitted is in **support** of this proposal indicating that we need an advocate in the justice system to support elderly people.

**Ms. Teresa Norris: Support** this bill.

**Ms. Hilary Mitchell: Support** this bill.

**Ms. Mary Alice Schulte: Support** this bill.

**Ms. Irma Rappaport: Support** this bill.

**Ms. Tricia Mulvey: Support** this bill.

**Ms. Carol Lindstrum: Support** this bill.

**Ms. Amy Badini; Support** this bill.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Submitted.

**Reported by:**  
**Toni Lombardi, Clerk**  
**Richard Ferrari, Assistant Clerk**

**Date: 3/14/24**