

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5332

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON

Title: HOMELESSNESS.

Vote Date: 3/7/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/5/2024

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:

Housing Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To establish the interagency council on homelessness. This council would consist of a wide variety of voices to develop a coordinated response to the housing crisis and the issues associated with homelessness facing Connecticut. Members would convene to consider methods to strengthen and develop programs to address homelessness.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

This substitute language makes an addition in lines 13-14. The addition is as follows: "(11) the executive director of the Office of Health Strategy."

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Liza Andrews, VP of Government/Public Relations, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(CCADV\)](#): Supports HB 5332 stating that a council would be valuable to have continuous public conversations on how to address Connecticut's housing crisis. Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness amongst women and children, and in Connecticut, domestic violence shelters play a crucial role in the state's homelessness response. The emergency shelter run by CCADV's 18 member organizations are overflowing

and operating at roughly 150% capacity. Wait times for finding suitable housing is contributing to this overflow and adding to the housing crisis.

[Erin Boggs, Executive Director, Open Communities Alliance \(OCA\)](#): Supports the bill but would encourage the addition of service providers and advocates.

[Nakitta Brown, Community Member](#): Supports the legislation as it would help combat homelessness throughout the state by streamlining efforts and resources to offer more effective support.

[Thomas Burr, Public Policy and Affiliates Relations Manager, National Alliance of Mental Illness \(NAMI-CT\)](#): Supports the bill because an interagency council would address homelessness in numerous ways. First, the council would ensure that national best practices are followed by input from individuals who have experienced homelessness, as this unique insight is critical in shaping a response. The establishment of a council would also prioritize anti-racist and culturally specific services to "redress the disparate impact of homelessness on communities of color, LGBTQIA+ youth, and other marginalized communities and to prevent and end homelessness for all." Finally, a council would transform the relationships that state agencies have with local communities by coordinating human-center evidence-based approaches to solving homelessness.

[Carlos Hernandez](#): Supports the bill as addressing homelessness "requires a coordinated, comprehensive response that bridges multiple sectors and services."

[Mag Morelli, President, Leading Age Connecticut](#): Supports HB 5332 and the inclusion of the Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) as a member of the interagency council. This appointee recognizes the housing needs of Connecticut's aging population and allows their voice to be heard, as "nationwide, older adults are the fastest-growing group of people experiencing homelessness." This appointment seeks to remedy this within Connecticut.

[Caitlin Rose, CEO, Friendship Service Center Inc.](#): Supports the creation of an interagency council; however, the Friendship Service Center recommends implementing revisions to the bill, including a commitment to anti-racist policies, the inclusion of people who have experienced homelessness, the inclusion of homelessness service providers, and a plan to coordinate with member agencies to provide shelter in severe weather.

[Carol Scully, Director of Advocacy, The Arc of Connecticut Inc.](#): Supports the bill due to "policies and councils that address the need for the creation of more affordable housing across the state" as disabled communities face many difficulties in finding affordable housing in Connecticut.

[Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving](#): Supports the bill as addressing homelessness requires cross-agency collaboration and communication to develop and enact a comprehensive system of support.

These 10 pieces of testimony support HB 5332 as it would improve coordination and maximize the funding state agencies receive to respond to homelessness. These testimonies recommend that the bill be amended to follow national best practices to ensure partner

engagement between agencies and those within the community that have been impacted by homelessness:

- [Lisa Cesario, Communications Specialist, Development Department at Columbus House](#)
- [Kelly Fitzgerald, United Way of Greater New Haven](#)
- [Sarah Fox, CEO, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness \(CCEH\)](#)
- [Leonardo Ghio, Co-Chair, Northwest Coordinated Access Network](#)
- [Rose Kelly, Interim Director of HMIS and Strategic Analysis, CCEH](#)
- [Mary Lee Kieman, President and CEO, YWCA Greenwich](#)
- [Margaret LeFever, Coordinated Access Network Director, United Way of Greater New Haven](#)
- [Rachel Merva, Board Member, Beth El Center](#)
- [Matthew Morgan, Executive Director, Journey Home](#)
- [Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU-CT](#)

These three testimonies support the establishment of the interagency council but recommend adding non-profit organizations to achieve more representation on the council:

- [Dondre Roberts, Housing Provider, Connecticut Apartment Association \(CTAA\)](#)
- [Jeff Shaw, Senior Public Policy Advisor, The Alliance](#)
- [Lauren Tagliatela, Franklin Communities](#)

The following three testimonies express general support for addressing homelessness:

- [Zoeann Day](#)
- [Marissa DiStefano, Manager of Resident Services, Carabetta Management](#)
- [Danielle O'Sullivan](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

These three pieces of testimony express general opposition to the bill:

- [Gary Corigliano](#)
- [Penny Cozza](#)
- [Jessica Stauder](#)

Reported by: Mario Volpe

Date: 3/19/2024