

# Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-218

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE CREATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF A STATE-WIDE PROGRAM FOR THE DELIVERY OF BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF COUNSELING SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND

**Title:** FAMILIES.

**Vote Date:** 3/5/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/29/2024

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Kathleen M. McCarty, 38<sup>th</sup> District.

Rep. Tammy R. Exum, 19<sup>th</sup> District.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill would establish a task force to study the creation and administration of a state-wide program for the delivery of bereavement and grief counseling services to children and families, at no cost to them. The information gathered by this task force would allow the effective development and implementation of appropriate evidence-based care for children experiencing grief and/or bereavement in order to mitigate the potential harm done in both the short and long term for these children.

Children not experiencing grief or bereavement already find it difficult to express their emotions or share their thoughts appropriately with adults in their lives and the experience of grief or bereavement exacerbates that issue greatly.

The S language lays out with more detail who would be appointed to the task force and what the task force would study.

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

**NOTE: TESTIMONY MAY NOT REFLECT CURRENT LANGUAGE OF THE BILL**

[The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity, Food and Nutrition Policy Analyst, Christian Duborg, and Childrens Policy Analyst, Thomas Nuccio](#) support this bill and stated several recommendations derived from their [study of community-based](#)

[bereavement and grief counseling resource centers](#) including: the extent and availability of children's grief and bereavement organizations around the state; the feasibility of and recommendations for implementation of a state-wide program for the delivery of grief and bereavement services at no cost to participants; and the types of services that programs should provide, the eligibility criteria, and the optimal geographic distribution of grief and bereavement centers.

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

[Dr. Linda Dalessio](#) supports this bill because research shows that children that have lost a loved one or suffered sexual abuse will require trauma-informed care and often end up on antidepressant therapy. They state that the state of Connecticut needs more wraparound services that involve medical providers, counseling, life coaching, and trauma-informed care.

[The Cove Center for Grieving Children, Executive Director, Allison Gamble](#) supports this bill because one of their own studies helped them to determine the necessity to holistically analyze children's grief and bereavement. This task force would allow for the complete understanding of the needs of bereaved children, the current offerings of free services across Connecticut, and how the current providers can find new ways to expand services.

[The Connecticut Association of School Based Health Center Inc, Executive Director, Melanie Wilde-Lane](#) supports the development of this task force and stated the difficulty faced by school-based health centers in providing services to families.

[Connecticut General Assembly, Assistant House Republican Leader, 38<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, Representative Kathleen M. McCarty](#) supports this testimony and cites the report from the working group, noting that young people who experience grief are 66% more likely to report self-harm and 75% more likely to report suicidal ideation. They state that the task force shall provide recommendations on the feasibility of a state-wide program, the creation of a department within a state agency, the intersection of grief and bereavement on marginalized communities, the expansion of counseling centers, and possible utilization of gifts, grants, donations, and federal funding.

[Yale School of Public Health, MPH Candidate, Hannah Scott](#) supports this bill because of their own experience as a young person dealing with grief and bereavement due to the unfortunate passing of their mother on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. They state the trouble children face with expressing their emotions and appropriately sharing their thoughts with adults, and how it is severely exacerbated by experiencing the death of someone. Childhood bereavement has significant and long-lasting effects on relationships, academic success, and developmental paths. They re-iterate the importance of this task force and strongly encourage including a young adult who has experienced death and bereavement at a young age on the task force.

[The Cove Center for Grieving Children, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Program Coordinator, Brooke Viens](#) supports this bill because of their experience as a licensed clinical social worker and an alcohol and drug counselor. They state that many of their adult clients they have worked with in the field of addiction counseling have disclosed that their substance abuse started following the death of a loved one because their grief was overlooked by

adults, and they did not have access to comprehensive services. This task force would allow the state to provide evidence-based grief services to those who are most in need and at risk.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Patrick Buckley**

**Date: 3/11/2024**