

AGING COMMITTEE
S.B. No. 3 – March 3, 2011

My name is Brittany Kane and I am from Enfield. I come here today as a student of the UCONN School of Social Work and in support of S.B. No. 3, An Act Concerning Criminal Background Checks for Employees of Homemaker-Companion Agencies and Home-Health Agencies, however, with some reservations. On its surface, this bill is understandably justified in its intentions to conduct “comprehensive background checks” on any persons seeking employment from a homemaker-companion agency or home-health agency. This bill on the utmost simplistic level asks the people an easy question: Do you want to protect Grandma and Grandpa or not? It is difficult to understand how one could possibly consider answering no and choose not to support a bill that attempts to ensure the safety and well-being of one of our nation’s most vulnerable populations – the elderly.

Despite my support for the fundamental elements of S.B. No. 3, I do have some concerns regarding the clarity, funding, and unintended consequences of the bill itself. Section 2(a) of the bill explains that a background check for each applicant will be conducted including a review of criminal convictions; however, it does not clearly indicate what types of crimes are considered detrimental in obtaining employment with a homemaker-companion agency or home-health agency. Although the bill references “crimes involving violence or dishonesty” in the text, this is not until Section 4; leaving room for some ambiguity regarding the bill’s actual implemented interpretation into these agencies’ processes.

I also believe that S.B. No. 3 may be lacking in an explanation of how these complex and costly criminal background checks will be funded. Although I support this bill, I would like to know whether or not this bill is going to cost me – the taxpayer – money to put into practice.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the idea that this bill could potentially be harmful to the livelihood of thousands of able-bodied workers by closing the Door of Opportunity on an entire arena of possible careers and by denying employment to those who may have truly redeemed themselves since their past criminal convictions. Even with today’s economy making a positive turn, many people still remain unemployed and without any possible employment in the near future, especially those with criminal convictions.

Having explained my concerns regarding S.B. No. 3, I would like to reiterate my overall support for its intentions. I do believe this bill can be clarified, but even more so, I believe this bill can be positively implemented into the application and registration processes of these agencies.