

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5220

Title: AN ACT AUTHORIZING THIRD-PARTY FINGERPRINTING SERVICES.

Vote Date: 3/16/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/27/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would authorize the state Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to secure independent contractors to help with electronic fingerprinting services. This is meant to ease backlogs associated with fingerprinting and ensure the timely, electronic transmission of same into the state's database where they are analyzed as part of the criminal history record check process for certain jobs.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Cronin, Jean, legislative representative, Connecticut School Transport Association

Ms. Cronin said COSTA believes this bill would be a "tremendous benefit" in lessening the delay in processing fingerprints that currently exists at the state Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. She said the backlog is a major contributing factor to a shortage of school bus drivers because it now takes 14 to 16 weeks to get an individual cleared to work as a driver. "Most people do not or cannot wait that long to get approved for a job," she said, so they instead pass on the opportunity. Ms. Cronin pointed out that legislation approved several years ago required DESPP to process school bus driver background checks within 60 days, but she said the law has not helped much as many hand rolled ("inked") fingerprint cards are rejected by the department as being illegible. She said the

problem is one of too few staff and an antiquated computer system at DESPP unable to handle the volume, which has increased due to “legislative mandates for more and more occupations to undergo criminal background checks.” Allowing outside contractors to electronically scan prints and transmit them immediately to the State Police should help “significantly reduce the timeframe for getting school bus drivers licensed,” she said.

Morelli, Mag, president, LeadingAge Connecticut

Ms. Morelli said her membership group of 130 nonprofits objects to the mandated use of the state’s Applicant Background Check Management System (ABCMS), which requires applicants to travel to a state police barracks or the Middletown headquarters for fingerprinting. This is “extremely burdensome,” she said, as many applicants do not drive or must rely on public transportation. Allowing fingerprint scanning by independent contractors is one possible solution, she said, though the addition of a “convenience fee,” also paid by employers, could exacerbate a cost issue as each background check already costs \$75.

Muszynski, Mike, advocacy manager for the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

CCM said the bill would save local police departments time and costs related to administration.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

RESC Alliance – Connecticut Alliance of Regional Educational Service Centers

This network of six regional nonprofit service centers assists school districts with fingerprinting prospective employees and volunteers, according to testimony. The organization said a series of procedural decisions made by DESPP has made the current system of background checks “untenable.” It is now too expensive and creates a “tremendous administrative burden,” the group said. This has resulted in increased barriers to entry-level jobs in education, making it more difficult to secure substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, interns and volunteers. The group said it wants to see an efficient process in place, but it opposes DESPP engaging third-party vendors, outside of the RESCs, to handle fingerprinting services for schools. The RESCs already have made the capital investment in equipment to perform the service and the centers stand ready to work with DESPP on revised policies and procedures. The group asked that the state return to a centralized regional system, permitting an individuals’ background check to be used in multiple school districts. This would reduce the financial burden on job candidates, school districts, and municipalities.

Reported by: D.G. Fisher, Assistant Clerk

Date: March 29, 2018