

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5460

AN ACT CONCERNING MINIMUM EMPLOYEE WAGES FOR PROVIDERS OF

Title: STATE-CONTRACTED HUMAN SERVICES.

Vote Date: 3/22/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/13/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Increases the minimum wage for providers of state-contracted human services to fifteen dollars an hour.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Benjamin Barnes, Secretary, Office of Policy and Management; Spoke of concerns regarding the language of the bill [many of which were rectified in the substitute language] and warned consideration of the policy impact of creating a potential disparity in the way similar services are funded within state government.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Joe Aresimowicz, Speaker of the House, 30th House District, CT General Assembly; in support of this bill as it also provides for pro-rata increases in order to avoid a wage compression. Under this provision, employees making more than the current starting wage would receive a commensurate increase. His testimony explains that this bill would allow private providers to offer a fair wage and attract and retain talented staff in order to provide quality service.

Kevin Lembo, Comptroller, State of Connecticut; in support and acknowledges that “the state has a responsibility to ensure that agencies with whom it contracts to provide much needed social services are paying a fair wage to the frontline workers.”

Sherry Albert, Chief Operating Officer, Community Solutions, Inc (CSI); in support of this legislation. She feels as though her company is unable to hire and retain employees due to the low pay rate. She cites that many of her employees often take home such small salaries that they qualify for state programs such as SNAP, WIC, and HUSKY.

Deborah Chernoff, Public Policy Director, New England Healthcare Employees Union, District 1199, SEIU; District 1199 supports this bill, which would establish a minimum hourly wage of fifteen dollars for all private sector direct care workers. The supports and services these workers provide are essential to the health, happiness, and community integration of those they serve. She stresses that many of these employees have not seen a raise in multiple years and this has caused a severe wage compression.

Deborah Hoyt, President, Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home; in support.

Shannon Jacovino, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy, The ARC Connecticut; in support

Julie Erickson, Senior VP, CCARC; states that raising the standard of living will improve employee retention and reduce costs associated with turnover and with hiring new employees.

Denise Canady, Chief Compliance Officer, Marrakech, Inc; supports an increase in the minimum wage for these programs, and spoke of her firsthand experience being unable to find qualified employees who would stay in the position long-term.

Janice Chamberlain, Director of Human Resources, Horizons Programs, Inc.; in support of this legislation and stresses the importance of also providing adequate funding for state-contracted human services.

Marion Leist, Vice President of Advocacy and Business Development, HARC, Inc.; stresses that there has not been a cost of living increase in over 10 years.

Lori Pelletier, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO; emphasizes in her testimony that economics dictates that raising the minimum wage would boost the state's income and sales tax revenue collections without raising taxes.

Paul Rosin, Executive Director, Community Residences Inc. (CRI); in support. Stresses the high turnover rate due to not being able to offer a competitive wage.

Mary Etter, Executive Director, Bristol Adult Resource Center;

Heather Gates, President, Community Health Resources (CHR); Spoke specifically on the hardships of hiring bi-lingual and bi-cultural employees.

Denis Geary, Executive Director, Jewish Association for Community Living

Eileen M. Healy, Executive Director, Independence Northwest;

Denise Henry, Executive Director, SARAH, Inc.; in support and spoke of the troubling issue of wage compression between the people they help and the staff that assist them.

Vonne Horton; in support.

Heather LaTorra, President, Marrakech Inc.; in support

Kellie Lusier, in support

Heather Marquis, Goodwill of Western and Northern CT; in support

Chris McNaboe, Chief Executive Officer, Horizons; in support

Fernando Muniz, Chief Executive Officer, Community Solutions, Inc.; support but opposed language which was removed via sub language.

Mary Beth O'Neill, President and Chief Executive Officer, Key Human Services; in support. Reiterates that the reason her organization does not pay fifteen dollars per hour is because the State does not adequately fund their contract.

Nicole Powell; in support

Donaja Richardson; In support

Anne Ruwet, Chief Executive Officer, CCARC; in support

Gian- Carl Casa, President, The Alliance; in support [with concerns addressed in substitute language]

Barry Simon, Chief Executive Officer, Oak Hill;

Richard Stoops, Group Home Manager, Catholic Charities Inc.; in support. Emphasizes the desire to attract and retain quality employees and implores the committee to do all it can to make that a reality.

Jim Turner, Communications Director, Horizons- South Windham; in support

Tracey Walker, Chief Executive Officer, Journey Found; in support but worries about being unable to supply this rate increase while keeping all their employees.

Simon Wells, Director of Supported Employment, Horizons; in support

Shanna York, Direct Care Staff, Oak Hill; in support

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No Opposition was submitted.

Reported by: Kayleigh Royston

Date: 03/27/2018

