

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-318

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY INTERVENTIONS FOR

Title: AT-RISK YOUTH.

Vote Date: 3/15/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/6/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

To establish a task force to study interventions for at-risk youth.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

No Administration/Agency Testimony Submitted

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Erica Bromley, Juvenile Justice Liaison-Connecticut Youth Services Association

Although I support the concept of the bill, creating a more diverse group of participants is critical. As more and more focus is put on community based agencies and services the need for representation from that sector is important. The Youth Service Bureau System, as designated by the JJPOC's Community-Based Diversion System as the Community Hub in each town, must be at the table when studying interventions for at-risk youth.

Another group missing from the list of task force members is youth and families (especially those at-risk or system involved-past or present). We know how critical it is to hear from those receiving services from the systems and interventions that are being studied. Youth voice has been proven to have positive effects on working to improve systems and programming, as they have direct experience. Helping to strengthen the system from the inside is necessary and youth have ideas and solutions that are often missed when their voices are not included.

Connecticut Juvenile Justice-Alliance

The Alliance supports the concept of a legislatively mandated, cross-sector group to determine ways to better identify and serve at-risk youth, but cannot support the current bill language as it does not include any current or former at-risk youth or community members. There is a strong movement nationally and in Connecticut to ensure that “nothing about us without us” becomes a reality across policy issue areas.

Once a group is formed, it is hard to reverse engineer equity and undo power imbalances. The proposed task force represents an opportunity for Connecticut to intentionally create a group that centers the voices of young leaders whose lived experience can best inform the work the task force is created to achieve.

Susan Kelley, Director- Alliance for Children’s Mental Health

ACMH is the only independent statewide policy and advocacy group in Connecticut that focuses solely on children’s mental health issues, including the critical overlap of mental health with child-serving systems such as education, child welfare, and juvenile justice. Through our collective voice, we advocate for smart policies and better outcomes for all children in the state.

Kaley Lentini, Legislative Counsel-American Civil Liberties Union of CT

The ACLU-CT recommends that this task force explore a wide range of issues dealing with at-risk youth. We encourage the task force to include in its study school to prison pipeline issues, including issues of school resource officers in schools. We would also encourage that the study look at issues faced by detained youth; homeless youth, including LGBTQ homeless youth; youth of color; and youth with mental illnesses, disabilities, and substance use disorders.

Stephanie Luczak, Policy Intern-Connecticut Voices for Children

The bill language currently indicates that the population should be to serve “youths that are less likely to successfully transition into adulthood.” This language may be too broad and lose focus. “At-risk” could mean many things for youth in Connecticut; it could mean youth at-risk for criminal justice involvement but it could also mean youth at-risk for disengagement or youth at-risk for developing a substance use disorder. By specifying the population of youth that will be of target for intervention, the task force would be more efficient and effective.

Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director-Connecticut Association of Schools

The members of the proposed task force include Commissioners from various agencies but no representatives from education professionals that are directly involved in the daily life of schools. CAS requests that our association be given a seat on the task force. We bring the voice and experience of school leaders; those who are actively engaged in the daily life of schools and in the provision of professional development for school staff-even parents and students.

Michelle Piccerillo, President-CT Youth Services Association

CYSA supports the concept of this bill but we believe that in order for the Task Force to be effective, Youth Service Bureaus, or CYSA, must be an integral part of this group. As more and more at-risk youth are diverted from the court system and placed in communities to be served by programs and services provided by YSBs, a task force such as that established by SB 318 needs the input of the agencies positioned to and already providing interventions to these young people.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Reported by: Joyce Turner

Date: 3/28/18