



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Human Services Committee

Thursday, March 21, 2019

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
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House Bill #7359 - An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Health and Human Services Network

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports the underlying concept of House Bill #7359, to build a healthier and safer environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) persons through the establishment of a Health and Human Services Network dedicated to assessing and meeting their unique needs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons represent all races, ethnicities, ages, and social classes; and live and work across all regions of the state. Therefore, it is imperative that there are culturally competent services available statewide. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons often experience health disparities, stigma, discrimination, mental health and substance abuse issues at higher rates than others. They also often have unique health care needs as a result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which the Department works to mitigate and address through several statewide programs and initiatives. The DPH also recognizes the value of focusing attention on these issues as well as the importance of improving the quality and quantity of available services.

While the Department supports the establishment of an LGBTQ Network to address the unique health and human service needs of this population, the raised bill leaves the Department with several questions. The bill appropriates funds from the General Fund for the Department to assist the Network in conducting a needs analysis as well as to fund grants to be awarded by the Department to assist in the mission of the Network. However, the mission of the Network is unclear. It is also unclear what the Department's role and responsibility will be in conducting the needs analysis, what the needs analysis will consist of, and what activities the grants awarded by the DPH will support.

In addition, Section 1(b) (4) describes the Network assisting the Department in developing requests for proposals. It should be noted that the DPH must adhere to stringent state procurement standards as set forth by the Office of Policy and Management. These standards would prohibit any members of the Network from participating in the competitive bidding

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process or activities in the case of an actual or potential conflict of interest. It important to note that Network members would not be eligible for any subsequent grant awards.

While the DPH supports the spirit and intent of this bill, the Department cannot accomplish its various requirements, in particular those related to the needs assessment and administration of community grants, within existing resources.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.