

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7164

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Title: FOR HUMAN SERVICES.

Vote Date: 3/21/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/14/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Kathleen Brennan, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Social Services;

Sections 1 and 2 eliminate the cost of living adjustments for recipients of TFA, State Administered General Assistance, and State Supplemental for the Aged, Blind and Disabled programs. CT is one of the few states that allows TFA recipients to retain their full cash assistance benefit if their earnings are less than or equal to the FPL.

Sections 3-6 eliminate rate increases for boarding homes over the biennium and could result in state savings of 1.7 mil in FY 2020 and 3.7 mil in FY 2021.

Section 8 eliminates inflation increases over the biennium and state savings of 14.4 mil in FY 2020 and 30.6 mil in FY 2021 are anticipated.

Sections 10 and 11, while waiving the requirements for a public hearing on the closure of a nursing home, retains the full range of resident rights protections.

Section 13 institutes an asset test for the Medicare Savings Program and the Department feels that after factoring in personnel and systems costs, it will result in net savings to the state of 25.6 mil in FY 2021.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Mairead Painter, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Department of Rehabilitation Services;

The Department is hopeful that the proposed changes to the current process will strengthen the quality of the nursing homes and improve the care that residents receive. They reference section c of this bill which addresses a change in the process related to poor quality homes which may no longer be viable and removes the mandate for a public hearing which may cause undue hope for a positive outcome.

Melissa McCaw, Secretary, Office of Policy and Management; the Office is in support of this legislation as it will result in long-term, sustainable savings, including \$21.2 million in FY 2020 and \$54.7 million in FY 2021 (before factoring in the federal share). They would like to highlight the consideration of a change to the Medicare Savings Program, they emphasize the necessity for the DSS's eligibility system used for asset verification be in place prior to implementation to reduce administrative costs.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Karen Siegel, Connecticut Voices for Children; They support the recommendation to maintain the provisions of the Governors' proposed budget that protect families' eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP and recommend a series of strategic investments and cost-saving measures across health and social services agencies. They stress that when addressing services as lean as Connecticut's Medicaid Program, it is crucial to ensure that attempts to save money do not inadvertently result in poor quality of life or difficulty accessing services. They are concerned that this proposal does not reverse the cut in eligibility made in 2015.

Kimberly Nystrom, President, New England Home Care; is in support of the proposal in this legislation which provides resources to assist state agencies in examining various methodologies, including a section 1115 demonstration project, to develop and implement a plan to address gaps in the state's treatment of substance abuse disorders.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Mag Morelli, LeadingAge Connecticut; is in opposition to this legislation as there is no evidence or logical reason that the development of a registry of this type would be a mechanism for improving care. LeadingAge feels as though Section 4 of this bill, in which the state's Medicaid rates paid to homemaker-companion agencies are set by a fee schedule established by the Department of Social Services and are not based on individual cost reports.

Matthew Barrett, President, Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities; has concerns with this bill as section 8 would freeze nursing home rates for the biennial period (though property improvements, fair rent, would be allowed. They recommend an alternative to the excess bed reduction strategy that could achieve a reduction in licensed bed capacity but avoid the consequences of rate rebasing.

Joe Markley, Companions and Homemakers; is in opposition to section 12 of this legislation which would prohibit any contractual restriction on a homecare workers' ability to work for any specific individual.

Dianne Stone, Director, Newington Senior and Disabled Center; is in opposition to an asset test within the Medicare Savings Program.

Anna Doroghazi, Advocacy Director, AARP Connecticut; AARP expresses concern about the proposed application of an asset test to MSP eligibility and feels as though the Governor's proposal does not take into account that CT has some of the highest housing prices, property taxes, and energy expenses in the nation.

National Multiple Sclerosis Society; the society is concerned about the proposal of an asset test when determining an individual's qualification for the Medicare Savings Program. They feel as though the cost of living with MS, coupled with their earlier ability to positively contribute to the workforce, an asset test may disqualify individuals from this program.

Jim Schmerling, President and CEO, Connecticut Children's Medical Center; has concerns with the bill- specifically section 16, where there is a proposal that hospitals with readmissions within 30 days after discharge for a related diagnosis would be subject to a readmission penalty adjustment of 15%

Connecticut Hospital Association; Opposes various sections of this legislation.

Home Care Association of America; is concerned that the provision regarding home care agencies is overly broad. The Home care industry does not intent to limit the ability of caregivers to earn a living and feel as though a non-solicitation agreement, if not carefully crafted, could potentially impair the care of clients.

Karyn Cosgrove, Owner, Fernwood Rest Home; is in opposition to this legislation.

Jesse Martin, Vice President, SEIU District 1199; is in opposition to this legislation as he feels it would create devastating changes to the nursing home industry.

Christopher Neary; is in opposition to this bill as he feels it poses an existential threat to home care agencies and their employees.

Rhonda Boisvert, Pleasant View Manor Residential Care Home; is in opposition to section 6 of this legislation, which sets a cap on residential home care rates.

Amy Katz, Administrator, Tidelawn Manor; is in opposition to this legislation.

Jay Kiley; is in opposition to this legislation.

Dennis Patouhas, Comfort Keepers; is in opposition to this legislation.

Carol Keane; is in opposition this legislation as it would prohibit any contractual restriction on a homecare workers' ability to work for any specific individual.

Jim Keane; is in opposition to this legislation.

Gordon Wall, Synergy HomeCare; is in opposition to this legislation and feels as though non-solicitation agreements would not be a hindrance for caregivers.

Cynthia Ebanks; is in opposition to this legislation.

Robert Scandura; is in opposition to this legislation.

Robert Scandura, Jr; is opposed to section 12 of this legislation which he feels would create numerous problems and unintended consequences for Right at Home and other home care

agencies in Connecticut. He feels as though this section is exclusive and discriminatory to the homecare industry.

Nicol Rupolo; is in opposition to section 12 of this legislation.

Michael Savoie; is in opposition to this legislation.

Reported by: Kayleigh Royston

Date: 03/27/2019