

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-25

AN ACT RESTORING ELECTORAL PRIVILEGES TO FELONY CONVICTS

Title: WHO ARE ON PAROLE.

Vote Date: 3/29/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/15/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Co-Sponsors

Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.

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Sen. Marilyn V. Moore, 22nd Dist.

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Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.

Rep. Edwin Vargas, 6th Dist.

Rep. Christopher Rosario, 128th Dist.

Rep. Patricia Billie Miller, 145th Dist.

Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.

Rep. Patricia A. Dillon, 92nd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently only those on probation have their voting rights restored after a felony conviction. This bill would expand that to include those who are on parole as well (except those convicted of an election-related felony).

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Carleton J. Giles, Chairperson, State of Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles:

testified that the mission of the Board is to successfully reintegrate felony convicts into the

community, and that one of the ways to do this is to encourage civic engagement, and that this bill will serve that purpose.

Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel, State of Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services: testified that restoring the voting rights of parolees is important to their successful reentry into the community.

Alex Tsarkov, Executive Director, State of Connecticut Sentencing Commission: testified that there needs to be clarity as to whether there is a distinction between those on parole and those on special parole, and that this can generate some confusion if not clarified. He further testified that convicts are more successful at reintegration when they are engaged in their communities, and that the restoration of voting rights would support this reintegration.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senator Martin M. Looney, President Pro Tempore: testified that voting restrictions on felony convicts on parole perpetuate the feeling of powerlessness that many feel upon reentry to society. He also cited the disproportionate percentage of African Americans who have been incarcerated and stated that voting restrictions perpetuate institutional discrimination.

Rob Baril, President of SEIU District 1199 New England: testified that black and latino men and women who are on parole are overrepresented, and that many of them are union members or the family of union members. He stated that withholding voting rights to these people has the effect of depressing the vote of people of color. He further testified that other states who allow parolees to vote have not experienced an uptick in claims of voter fraud.

Michelle Kenefick, President, and Stephen Wanczyk, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter: testified that those on parole should be given every opportunity to fully participate in society, and that participating in the electoral process can be an important step to becoming a “good citizen” of a community.

Also testifying in support:

Tiheba Bain, Women Against Mass Incarceration
Elaine Dove, Hamden
James Jeter, Full Citizens Coalition
Brennon Mendez, New Haven
Rev. Andrew Osmun, One Standard of Justice
Brent Peterkin, Project Longevity
Nicole Porter, The Sentencing Project
Quinnipiac Civil Justice Clinic
Yvonne Senturia, League of Women Voters of CT
Tom Swan, Connecticut Citizens Action Group
Ariva Walker, Planned Parenthood
Julia Wilcox, The Alliance
Cheri Quickmire, Common Cause
Marta Daniels, Chester

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

**Reported by: Melissa Russell
Assistant Clerk**

Date: 4/9/2019