

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-394

Title: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COUNCIL ON PROTECTING WOMEN'S HEALTH.

Vote Date: 3/8/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/4/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This legislation creates a Council on Protecting Women's Health, tasked with advising the Public Health and Insurance committees on necessary actions to safeguard the state from negative federal legislative changes. The Council would be comprised of six public officials and fourteen members of the public, appointed by the legislative leaders. Women who have experienced difficulty accessing healthcare must be represented on the panel. Beginning on January 1, 2020 the council must report to the committees.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None submitted.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV): The proposed legislation would be beneficial for victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence (DV) impacts a victim's health in all aspects and can lead to anxiety, complications during pregnancy, and traumatic brain injury. One in four women have been victims of DV in the United States, and as a result over two-thirds of victims have experienced a traumatic brain injury. According to the CDC, the consequences of DV can cost a victim over \$100,000 in healthcare services. It is important that women have access to quality healthcare in Connecticut, especially given the potential change to federal legislation. CCADV works to educate and support professionals who meet with victims of DV, and has offered their time and knowledge to the council.

Susan Yolen, Vice President, Policy and Advocacy, Planned Parenthood of Southern

New England: This legislation has been proposed during a critical time, as the US Department of Health and Human Services recently posted its final version of a gag order on the Title X family planning program. This order will impact approximately \$2 million in grant funding that covers annual visits, cancer screening, access to contraceptives, and a number of other services. In addition, the rule will make it difficult to provide support for women who may be considering an abortion. The decrease in funding and changes to federal law will have a significant impact on women in Connecticut, especially those with low income and women of color. Planned Parenthood is supportive of the bill, as it appears that this legislation will protect against the potential negative consequences of the federal changes. However, Planned Parenthood suggests that rather than creating a new council, the General Statutes be amended to place this responsibility with the CT Commission on Women, Children and Seniors in conjunction with the Governor's Council on Women and Girls. The Governor's Council is staffed by commissioners, legislators from the four caucuses, and other Constitutional officers. This council is already tasked with reviewing policies that support women and girls in our state, including health related matters.

Connecticut Senate Democratic Caucus: This legislation was proposed as part of the caucus's 2019 legislative agenda. The bill would create a council that would notify the Public Health and Insurance committees of federal legislation and action that would negatively impact the health of women in our state. The testimony referenced the *June Medical Services v. McGee* case that was heard in February. According to the testimony, the case resulted in a 5-4 decision that narrowly closed in on the rights granted by *Roe v. Wade*, despite its seemingly straightforward nature. In addition to this case, there is federal action being taken that may impact women's healthcare. The Trump administration announced that institutions providing abortion referrals will no longer receive federal aid. This would take money from organizations such as Planned Parenthood and potentially direct it towards "religiously-based, anti-abortion groups." Cutting funding would impact a provider's responsibility to advise individuals on reproductive health. In establishing this council, the state can regulate any legal threats and ensure that the health of Connecticut's women and girls is protected.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None submitted.

Reported by: Meagan Schantz

Date: 3/11/19