

Veterans' Affairs Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-801
AN ACT EXPANDING CERTAIN VETERANS' ACCESS TO PUBLIC

Title: ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

Vote Date: 3/12/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/14/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' Affairs Committee
Sen. Saud Anwar
Sen. Paul M. Formica

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently, the Connecticut Department of Social Services counts a veteran's non-service related benefits as income when calculating income eligibility for public assistance programs. As written, S.B. No. 801 seeks to end that practice, increasing eligibility for such programs among low-income veterans.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[David Seifel, Legislative and Regulations Analyst, Department of Social Services](#): Speaking on behalf of the Department of Social Services, Mr. Seifel stated that the proposed legislation would result in an increase in eligibility, caseloads, and expenditures, and that the department did not have the required funds for such a change, nor did they expect to receive additional funds in the current fiscal climate.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Daniel C. Thurston, Chairman, Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition](#): Mr. Thurston testified that the CVMC supported legislation to provide veterans with expanded access to public assistance programs.

[K. Robert Lewis, Chairman, the American Legion Department of Connecticut Legislative Committee](#): Mr. Lewis testified that the American Legion supported S.B. 801 without

equivocation, and that the legislation was of particular importance as it helped most those who lived below subsistence levels in Connecticut.

[Eileen DeGaetano, Retired Geriatric Care Manager](#): Ms. DeGaetano testified that the current statutes caused her father, a 94-year old WWII veteran, to lose eligibility for the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders Waiver services because his “Aid and Attendance with disability” benefits were treated as income rather than reimbursements. As a result, he could no longer afford home care and was facing the prospect of being forced into a nursing home. A post script on Ms. DeGaetano’s testimony mentions that it was written while her father was alive, but that he had recently passed away.

[Steven L. Rubin, President-Elect, Connecticut Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys](#): Mr. Rubin noted that federal law states that the benefits in S.B. No. 801 are not to be considered income for any purposes, and that the Connecticut Department of Social Services has wrongfully treated such reimbursements as income.

[Matthew T. Stillman, Accredited Veterans Representative, Stillman & Associates, LLC](#): Mr. Stillman testified that the current method used by the DSS for assessing income directly contradicts federal statutes, and that it is overly restrictive when determining veterans’ eligibility for benefits.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No other sources expressed for S.B. 801

Reported by: Benjamin S. Watson, Asst. Clerk Date: March 18th, 2019