

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-929

AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL MANDATED REPORTERS, THE DURATION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT INVESTIGATIONS AND THE REPEAL OF CERTAIN REPORTING

Title: REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Vote Date: 3/7/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/5/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

To include as mandated reporters people who have regular contact with children and provide services to or on behalf of children pursuant to a contract with or credential issued by the Department of Children and Families, victims services supervisors employed by the Judicial Branch and employees of the juvenile justice program operated by or pursuant to a contract with the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Department. Furthermore, this bill would require the completion of investigations of child abuse and neglect not later than thirty-three business days after receipt of a report. Lastly, this bill would repeal reporting requirements concerning certain children and youths in the custody of the Department of Children and Families and written notification requirements concerning reports of abuse and neglect.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner, Department of Children and Families:

The commissioner testified in support of this bill. The recent change of juvenile justice programs to the Judicial Branch has called for a change to the list of mandated reporters. The Judicial Branch and DCF request that the current language of "victim services supervisors" be changed to "victim services advocates" since supervisors do not carry a caseload or conduct investigations. Furthermore, the Department appreciates the change of 45 calendar days to complete an investigation to 33 business days. It is believed that this will increase the ability for child service workers to complete an investigation thoroughly. Additionally, DCF

supports the repeal of reporting requirements pertaining to committed delinquents since the Department does not have jurisdiction in this matter any longer. The Department also requests that the Commissioner be mandated to serve on the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee instead of the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission because of the jurisdiction changes.

Judicial Branch:

The Judicial Branch submitted testimony in support of this bill. As mentioned above, the Branch requests a change from “victim services supervisors” to “victim services advocates” since the supervisors do not carry a caseload and interact as regularly with children compared to the advocates. Secondly, the Judicial Branch asks that the effective date be pushed to October 1, 2019 to give enough time to adequately train staff and revise contracts if necessary.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

See response from administration/agency.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Pegah Banankhah, Student Legal Intern, Center for Children’s Advocacy:

Pegah testified in partial opposition to this bill. It is believed that including additional mandated reporters could negatively impact the child welfare system in Connecticut. The Center for Children’s Advocacy believes, based on the DCF Court Monitor’s Reports, the Department has trouble addressing the increasing caseload from mandated reporters and by adding more employers to the list, it will only worsen. Secondly, it is possible that this bill would reduce the likelihood of parents using service providers for fear that a report would be filed against them. On the other hand, CCA does support the section of the bill that calls for 33 business days instead of 45 calendar days to complete an investigation.

Reported by: Mikhela Hull

Date: 3/18/19