Appropriations Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

10:00 AM in Room 2C of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 11:32 AM by Chairman, Rep. Walker T. 093.

following a 10 AM public hearing on S.R. 34 and H.R. 34

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Daugherty Abrams M. S13; Formica P. S20; Hartley J. S15; Kushner J. S24; Lesser M. S09; Miner C. S30; Osten C. S19; Somers H. S18; Winfield G. S10

Representatives: Abercrombie C. 083; Baker A. 124; Betts W. 078; Bolinsky M. 106; Candelaria J. 095; Case J. 063; Currey J. 011; Dathan L. 142; Dauphinais A. 044; Dillon P. 092; DiMassa M. 116; Felipe A. 130; France M. 042; Gibson B. 015; Gilchrest J. 018; Gonzalez M. 003; Haddad G. 054; Hall C. 059; Horn M. 064; Johnson S. 049; Kokoruda N. 101; Lavielle G. 143; Mastrofrancesco G. 080; McCarty K. 038; Nolan A. 039; Pavalock-D'Amato C. 077; Perone C. 137; Petit W. 022; Porter R. 094; Reyes G. 075; Rosario C. 128; Rotella K. 043; Ryan K. 139; Simanski B. 062; Simms T. 140; Walker T. 093; Wilson D. 066; Zawistowski T. 061; Zupkus L. 089

Absent were:

Senators: Bradley D. S23; Flexer M. S29

Representatives: Tercyak P. 026

Representative Walker immediately recessed the meeting for caucus.

Representative Walker reconvened the meeting at 12:07 PM.

Seeing no comments Senator Osten asked the administrator to call the roll. The motion passed with 6 voting yea; 3 voting nay; 0 abstaining; 2 absent and not voting.

Representative Walker entertained a House Favorable motion on H.R. No. 34 RESOLUTION PROPOSING APPROVAL OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AND THE CONNECTICUT STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (CSEA-SEIU LOCAL 2001). A motion was made by Representative DiMassa and seconded by Representative Horn.

Representative Lavielle asked if the funds for this contract are included in the budget proposal and what the situation with the federal funds is.

Emily Shepard from the Office of Fiscal Analysis stated there is no specific adjustment, but the budget does not appropriate the account. She stated she believes there is sufficient funding.

Representative Walker added that Commissioner Beth Bye, in her testimony, stated it was included in their budget along with the Federal dollars.

Representative Lavielle asked for clarification on the Federal funds.

Emily Shephard explained the Federal funds included in this contract.

Representative Lavielle wanted to confirm that Connecticut is above the federally required 25% of the market rate.

Emily Shepard stated that the commissioner explained that they are at about 75% of the market rate under child care providers.

Representative Walker asked if there were any more questions and seeing none asked the administrator to call the roll. The motion passed with 25 voting yea; 13 voting nay; 0 abstaining; and 2 absent and not voting.

Representative Walker entertained a Joint Favorable motion on S.B. No. 424 (COMM) (File No. 442) AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY REGARDING CAMERA VIDEO SYSTEMS INSIDE SCHOOL BUSES AND STUDENT TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES USED TO TRANSPORT STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. SCal: 226 5/21/2019 Referred by Senate to Committee on Appropriations (TRA). A motion was made by Representative Abercrombie and seconded by Representative Reyes.

Senator Formica asked if the bill was moving forward with the fiscal note intact.
Representative Walker stated that the fiscal note for the study is currently in the proposed budget.

Seeing no other questions Representative Walker asked the administrator to call the roll. The motion passed with 31 voting yea; 17 voting nay; 0 abstaining; and 3 absent and not voting.

Representative Walker entertained a Joint Favorable motion on Substitute for S.B. No. 752 (RAISED) (File No. 55) AN ACT CONCERNING SMOKING AND VAPING ON BEACHES IN STATE PARKS. SCal: 50
5/23/2019 Referred by Senate to Committee on Appropriations (ENV).
A motion was made by Representative Candelaria and seconded by Senator Kushner.

Representative Case asked what the fiscal note does.

Senator Osten stated the fiscal note is for the making of signs. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has stated this can be done in their “other expenses” line item and it is currently in the budget.

Representative Case asked if the fiscal note was for $5,000 or $20,000.

Senator Osten stated the fiscal note was $20,000 when it first came out but DEEP has stated they will try to do it for less.

Representative Case asked if the money was coming from Passport to Parks.

Representative Walker stated it is not.

Senator Formica asked for clarification on line 16 and if any smoking product legal or illegal in the future will be included in the ban.

Senator Osten stated the bill references generally to any legal forms of smoking and she assumes if they vote on marijuana there will be a discussion then.

Seeing no other questions Representative Walker asked the administrator to call the roll. The motion passed with 39 voting yea; 9 voting nay; 0 abstaining; and 3 absent and not voting.

Representative Walker entertained a Joint Favorable motion on Substitute for S.B. No. 957 (RAISED) (File No. 595) AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS OF TEACHER PREPARATION AND ALTERNATE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS AND THE CREATION OF AN ADJUNCT COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTRUCTOR PERMIT AND A COMPUTER SCIENCE ENDORSEMENT. SCal: 284
5/21/2019 Referred by Senate to Committee on Appropriations (ED).
A motion was made by Representative DiMassa and seconded by Representative Johnson.

Representative Lavielle stated her concerns with the fiscal note of the bill. She stated she supports computer science in schools, but will be voting “no” for today.
Representative Bolinsky asked if the curriculum already exists.

Representative Walker stated she believes it does not exist, but is unsure.

Representative Bolinsky stated his concerns and would be voting “no”.

Representative Walker stated she shares his concerns, but will be voting “yes” today in hopes that major changes are made.

Representative Dathan stated she shares the concerns, but will be voting “yes” today.

Representative Haddad spoke on section 2 of the bill where the majority of the fiscal note is focused on. He stated he would be willing to work with the chairs of the Education Committee to find new language that will mitigate the fiscal note and reach their goal. He stated he would be voting “yes” today with the expectation section 2 will change.

Representative McCarty stated the importance of computer science in schools and explained her concerns and would be voting “no” today.

Seeing no other comments Representative Walker asked the administrator to call the roll. The motion passed with 26 voting yea; 22 voting nay; 0 abstaining; and 3 absent and not voting.

Representative Walker entertained a Joint Favorable motion on H.B. No. 6714 (COMM) (File No. 776) AN ACT CONCERNING THE COST OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES. HCal: 484 5/23/2019 Referred by House to Committee on Appropriations (JUD). A motion was made by Representative Candelaria and seconded by Representative Reyes.

Representative Dathan stated she has a lot of concerns that the state profits off telephone calls with people who are serving time. She stated she has many concerns with the bill and would be voting “no” today.

Senator Miner stated he doesn’t know if he can support the bill today, but it is a worthwhile concept. He doesn’t support making money off the phone calls. He asked the chairs if the proposed budget would accommodate this concept if it moved forward today.

Representative Walker stated that the contract is already signed with the company for the next two years, but this conversation has to be continued in the future.

Representative Rosario shared his support for the bill and urged members to pass the bill.

Representative Nolan shared his support for the bill and asked members to support the bill.

Representative Lavielle asked what the actual profit margin for the state is on the phone calls.
Representative Walker stated she does not know and will get Representative Lavielle that information.

Senator Somers asked if the inmates have their own phones and if they can make phone calls at any time.

Representative Porter stated they are collect calls that you have to accept and they have phone booths where they line up and wait.

Senator Somers asked how the state makes money and who set the rate.

Representative Walker stated they charge the person accepting the collect call and the rate was set in the contract between the vendor and state.

Senator Somers asked who is authorized to mark up the charge and if the contract that was signed for two years was competitively bid.

Representative Walker stated the Department of Correction has the authority, and that the contract was competitively bid.

Senator Somers asked if the rates have gone up over the years.

Representative Walker stated that they have.

Senator Somers asked what the gross profit margin is.

Mike Ericson from OFA stated that the state gets 68% of the revenue.

Senator Somers asked how long this practice has been in place.

Rob Wysock from OFA stated that the state has been receiving payments from the vendor for over a decade.

Senator Somers asked if there has been an increase in revenue over the years.

Rob Wysock stated they receive about $7.7 million to $8 million that go to services run by DOC and the Judicial Department.

Representative Bolinsky stated that he finds it reprehensible that the state is profiting 68% on phone calls and it should not be a revenue stream for the state.

Senator Formica asked if the phones are all landline phones.

Representative Porter stated that the phones are like pay phones.

Senator Formica asked if they would have to provide computers for email or video communication.

Representative Walker stated no, that right now it is just with the land lines in the prison.

Senator Formica stated he was going to be voting “no” on this bill to just flag it and see where it goes moving forward.
Representative Wilson stated his concerns with the bill and that he would be voting “no”.

Representative Case stated his concerns with the bill and that he would be voting “no” for today.

Seeing no other questions Representative Walker asked the administrator to call the roll. The motion passed with 29 voting yea; 19 voting nay; 0 abstaining; and 3 absent and not voting.

Representative Walker stated votes would be held open until the call of session.

The meeting was recessed at 12:54PM

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00PM.

Susan Keane            Greg Castelli
Administrator             Committee Clerk