Committee on Children
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5165
Title: AN ACT REQUIRING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR PROSPECTIVE YOUTH CAMP EMPLOYEES.
Vote Date: 3/7/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/14/2019

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:
To mandate youth camps to conduct background checks of youth camp employees.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood:
Beth testified on this bill. Although she supports the effort to ensure the safety and health of all children through these background checks, she is also concerned about keeping up with the requirements set by the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). Another concern that she has is that background checks take 45 days to be processed, which means that they won’t be finalized until the camp season has ended. Lastly, Beth expressed that if her agency does not meet the CCDF deadlines Connecticut could potentially lose at least five percent of the $67 million in federal allocation.

Representative Brian Lanoue:
Representative Lanoue expressed his support for this bill. He mentioned that many children have been sexually abused by camp counselors. Many camps do not complete thorough background checks on these counselors, which puts children at risk of abuse. Representative Lanoue believes that by requiring these background checks camps will become much safer for children.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:
Keith Garbart, Connecticut Camping Association (CCA):
Keith expressed his support for the bill with amended language. He mentioned that the language of the bill should be changed to include background checks on all counselors, not just overnight counselors. He also expressed that the language should be changed to exclude FBI Background checks since they can pose a high cost to camps. Keith mentioned that he supports this bill and would like to see it applied to all camps and municipalities in a cost-effective way.

**M. Heinz:**
She expressed her support for this bill. She mentioned that her child had been sexually abused at a camp by one of the counselors. The camp had not done a background check on this employee that was a danger to children. She expressed that she would like to see background checks conducted, before employment so that children can be in a safe environment while away from home.

**Rania Mankarious, CEO of Crime Stoppers of Houston:**
Rania expressed her support for this bill. She mentioned that many children in camps are sexually abused by predators who have benefited from the lack of background checks. She also expressed that the camps should conduct these background checks with the revenue that they receive from camp registrations. Background checks are a vital component of ensuring the safety of each child during their time at these camps.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**
None expressed.

**Reported by:** Dea Ballij  
**Date:** 03/18/2019