Bill No.: HB-5192
Title: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE ROLE OF HOSPITALS IN THE TREATMENT OF OPIOID ADDICTION.
Vote Date: 4/30/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 3/4/2019

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
This bill seeks to establish a 15-member task force to study the role of hospitals in treating individuals suffering from opioid addiction and requires the task force, by January 1, 2020, to report its findings and recommendations to the Public Health Committee.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Representative Themis Klarides, House Minority Leader testified in support of the bill, calling the opioid epidemic “one of the largest and far-reaching social and public health epidemics of our time”. Rep. Klarides says that the program allows for a credit against the hospital tax for hospitals that make beds vacant for opioid treatment, and calls this a program vital in terms of treatment to fight the epidemic. Furthermore, the testimony states that this program is pivotal in protecting the citizens from the effects of opioid abuse.

Connecticut Hospital Association supports this bill because of the break for hospitals on the hospital tax that they would become eligible for if this bill were to become law. They state that the tax burden has been and still is a “formidable financial obligation for hospitals”, and that it carries negative externalities with it. The Association believes that the credit proposed in this bill encourages involved parties to redeploy resources into the opioid epidemic. The testimony states that in this state, hospitals contribute $27.7 billion to the state and local economies per year. CHA states three concerns with the bill: (1) the regulatory regime
leading to the creation of these beds, (2) the financial remuneration available for the services to be provided to the patients who occupy the beds, and (3) the need for post-hospital care, maintenance, treatment, and support programs to assist these patients in their recovery. Lastly, they state a request that the state maintain state-run treatment facilities, fund substance treatment programs adequately, and continue working with hospitals to match beds available with needs of the patients.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

*Ben Shaiken, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy, The Alliance* testified that while understanding the intent of the bill, using this bed space for strictly opioid addiction treatment is not the most effective way to address the problem. Additionally, the testimony suggests the state should build on the treatment network already established, by fully funding substance abuse treatment, rather than using funding for these beds.

Reported by:  Logan Cotter  Date: 05/06/2019