

Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6169

AN ACT INCREASING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR GRANDPARENTS AND
Title: OTHER NONPARENT RELATIVES RAISING NEEDY CHILDREN.

Vote Date: 2/20/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/14/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Aging Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would change the payment standard, to the extent permissible under federal law, for a family that receives benefits under the temporary family assistance program. If the head of the household is a nonparent caretaker relative and the legal guardian of a child shall be equal to 75% of the prevailing monthly foster care rate per child paid by the Dept. of Children and Family based on the child's age and medical condition.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut Dept. of Social Services submitted testimony in opposition to this proposal citing that based on SFY data they estimate that the cost of doing so would be approximately \$17.6 million. Their opposition to the bill is because of the significant cost that would result in providing this benefit.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senator Martin Looney, Eleventh District, offered testimony in support of this legislation. He has long advocated for legislation that offers support for relative caregivers, often grandparents, who make sacrifices that benefit the children and our society. He believes that they should get the assistance and the recognition they deserve.

Senator Tony Hwang, Twenty-Eight District, submitted remarks in support of this bill. He believes that many grandparents who are the primary guardians of the grandchildren may not have had the time to save for the cost associated with raising a child. Even if they qualify for

some cash assistance under the federal temporary family assistance program this support may not be enough.

Margaret Doherty, Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance of Foster & Adoptive Families submitted testimony in support of this proposal. She points out that many of these family's face significant financial peril and struggle on their own and that the state saves significant money by keeping these children out of foster care.

Ms. Peaches Quinn, President, Connecticut Coalition on Aging: She testified in support of this bill. Teenage pregnancy, addiction, mental health issues are a few of the reasons why grandparents or other family members come forward and raise their young ones. The growing number of grandparents and other family members becoming primary caregivers to children continues to increase and any financial assistance would be in the an investment in the health and wellbeing of their children.

AARP Connecticut: They submitted testimony in support of this bill. They point out that nearly 50,000 children live in households headed by grandparents and they play an important role in the well-being of their families with financial and other basic needs. Many of these grandparents live in poverty and about half live at or just above the poverty line. This effort to reduce the disparity between benefits paid to grandparents and those paid to non-relative foster parents should be supported.

Connecticut Area Agencies on Aging (CA4): offered testimony in support of this bill. They question the current situation where grandparents and other relatives receive less financial assistance than nonrelatives.

Most research today demonstrates the benefits of maintaining the family structure whenever it is possible and grandparents and other relatives should be encouraged to support needy, familial children regardless of their economic state. Economic security is the number one concern discussed by grandparents taking on the challenge of raising their grandchildren and this proposal would be of assistance.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No testimony submitted.

**Reported by: Gaia McDermott, Clerk
Richard Ferrari, Assistant Clerk**

Date: 2/27/19