

Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7102

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR CENTERS.

Vote Date: 2/26/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/19/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Aging Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Current law requires municipalities to appoint a municipal agent for the elderly to help seniors understand what community resources they have and file for benefits. The bill expands the list of potential municipal agents to include senior center staff. This increases the opportunity for help. A plan for senior centers and municipalities would be coordinated with the Department of Rehabilitation Services. DORS would be required to establish a 13-member statewide senior center work group in order to facilitate. The bill would define and authorize multipurpose senior centers and establish a working group which will help coordinate senior center planning, development, and services. The establishment of the working group will also allow senior centers to identify and implement best practices and provide more and better resources for seniors.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Amy Porter, Commissioner, State of Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation

Services: The agency, believes that while the bill is well intentioned, the department does not have the resources in terms of staff or funds to carry out the work. The agency also recommends that language in the bill be amended so that the definition of multi-purpose senior centers more closely matches the federal definition.

Steven Hernandez, Executive Director, CT Commission on Women, Children, and

Seniors: Mr. Hernandez testified in support of the bill, and recommends the committee and the bill implement recommendations from their task force summary.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Jennifer Bennett, Coordinator, Avon Senior Center: Ms. Bennett testified in support of the bill, stating that it will help senior centers provide programs, services, and activities that senior citizens need in order to age well, and that the working group will help ensure that senior center can thrive and meet the needs of communities.

Zachary McKeown, Legislative Associate, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities:

Mr. McKeown testified in support of the bill, stating that it will help provide the resources and framework to establish multi-purpose senior centers, and that the language in the bill is permissive and can allow for senior centers to thrive within communities.

Tamath Rossi, Director, Senior Services, Southbury:

Ms. Rossi testified in support of the bill, stating that the bill will help senior centers provide resources, including programs, services, and activities that will allow seniors to age well, and by funding the senior center liaison position, they will receive information and assistance that is "current and credible". Ms. Rossi also stated that by establishing the senior center work group, centers can continue to thrive and meet the needs for senior citizens.

Amy Saada, Director, Cromwell Senior Center: Ms. Saada testified in support of the bill, stating that it will help senior centers continue to develop and enhance senior center and the aging services that they provide, by establishing a senior center working group, and defining what senior center provide to communities.

Dianne Stone, Co-Chair, Senior Center Task Force: Ms. Stone testified in strong support of the bill, stating that the bill will help define senior centers, gives the state unit on aging responsibility in providing assistance for senior centers, and creates a statewide senior center working group, which will aid senior centers in identifying and implementing best practices.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Senior Center Directors of Southwestern CT: Testimony was submitted in opposition to the bill. The Senior Center Directors of Southwestern CT stated they believe a survey sent out to Centers in November 2018 was not thorough enough to determine the needs of the Directors and was sent out late in the year which resulted in data not being fully collected and analyzed. The testimony expressed concern regarding the strain on senior center directors and is unclear what considerations have been taken with regards to staff and budget.

Reported by:
Gaia McDermott, Clerk
Avarice Jacovino, Assistant Clerk

Date: 3/7/2019