Bills No.: HB-7292
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL WORKER TITLE PROTECTION.
Vote Date: 3/21/2019
Vote Action: JOINT FAVORABLE Substitute
PH Date: 3/12/2019
File No.: 6427

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Labor and Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
In Connecticut, wide variation exists in the use and practice under the title “social worker.” There is a desire to have educational credentials and licensure weigh more heavily for those who perform professional services under the title.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Christine Perra Rapillo, State of Connecticut, Office of Chief Public Defender
The Office of the Chief Public Defender opposes the bill due to many state agencies who have social workers on staff, but who lack the license. Those cited are The Division of Public Defender Services and Department of Children and Families, among others. The Division currently employs 38 social workers classified as Chief Social Worker, Social Worker I, II or III. The vast majority of these individuals have educational and training credentials. Those without have licenses in related fields and many years of work experience. The Division encourages the CGA to support substitute language to “grandfather” social workers within this category. (Substitute language addresses this issue).

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:
State Rep. Jillian Gilchrest, 18th District
Supports title protection for those who have obtained bachelors or master’s degrees in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education or a doctoral degree in Social Work. As a trained, UCONN educated MSW, she believes it necessary to give consumers an assurance when it comes to their professional interactions. She
recommended using NASW CT language to amend the bill and setting that language into Sec. 20-195q, so as not to confuse the general title protection. The bill’s language could be added into the social work license law as Sec. 20-195s.

Jennifer Bennett, Granby, CT, 1st Vice President of NASW CT
Favors title protection as a person who has obtained a BSW, MSW, and LMSW. Schooling, training, theory, ethics, internships and coursework are necessary to be appropriately credentialed. The role of a social worker is complex and multifaceted. They use theory as a basis for decision-making, apply resources, and are compassionate and knowledgeable. They are trained in cultural competency, diversity, and have an awareness to assist the most vulnerable populations. There needs to be title protection.

Kevin Berrill, Southbury, CT, Clinical Social Worker
Favors the bill in part because those with degrees have taken a rigorous curriculum that includes cultural competencies, ethical practice, human behavior, and therapeutic treatments. Degreed professionals are bound by the NASW Code of Ethics. Consumers will be protected. Other professions have title protection. This title protection may curtail false advertising. Thirty-five states have title protection in place, including Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and New Jersey.

Brenda Bryant, Glastonbury, CT
Title protection has significant implications for those who have invested considerable time into the cultural, ethical, and therapeutic aspects of social work. Having had vigorous and extensive training from an accredited institution of higher learning, with proper preparation and care, as well as being bound by ethical standards are of the utmost importance.

Dr. Barbara Bunk, Clinical Psychologist, CT Psychological Association
The Connecticut Psychological Association strongly supports title protections for all mental health professions. As of now, access to mental health services in Connecticut is severely limited. Patients and clients have long wait times, wait for callbacks, and are placed on wait lists for services. With substitute language changes, the bill should be adopted.

Kathleen Callahan, Stratford, CT
Favors title protection for all social workers. Original bill language would restrict the use of the title. Substitute language as suggested by NASW CT should be adopted. A student who graduates college in May, 2019, she was at one time a client who needed help in attaining sobriety. She is keenly aware that professionally trained social workers should hold the title especially for the most vulnerable populations.

Gabrielle Cyr, Berlin, CT
Favors the bill with the changes recommended by NASW CT. As the bill was drafted, title coverage is applicable to licensed clinical social workers. Substitute language that covers all individuals formally educated in social work should be encouraged. Further, anyone without an education should be regarded as human services workers or case workers, not social workers. Having spent 1,118 hours in five different social work internships and taken 31 social work-focused courses, plus having gone to out-of-class conferences and assignments, gives one an acute awareness of the need for title protection.
Taylor Endress, Manchester, CT
Spoke on behalf of UCONN School of Social Work baccalaureate cohort in strong support of title protection. Those with academic training or an adherence to ethical behavior reflect poorly on the profession. They can harm consumers. Recommends substitute language that permits those with a degree, but lacking a license, to be covered under the bill. Those who obtain baccalaureate degrees cannot be licensed. Even when an individual obtains an MSW, work on a macro-level does not require a license in order to practice.

Courtney Hall, Litchfield, CT
Supports strengthening the bill’s language by adopting recommendation from NASW CT. Educated and trained social workers should be protected as opposed to an acceptance of human services or psychology degrees under the title.

Dr. Mary Kane, Licensed Psychologist, Middlebury, CT
As Legislative Chair of CT Psychologists Association (CPA), she expressed strong support by her committee of title protection for all behavioral health professions. Having many different levels of practitioners in Connecticut, each with their own level of expertise and training, it is incumbent upon the industry to offer clients clarity regarding the services offered and professional credentials of the practitioner.

Steve Karas, MSW, LCSW, Retired State Social Worker
Extend title to those who have earned accredited BSW and MSW degrees, but have not pursued LCSW.

Michelle Kenefick, LCSW, SEP, East Haddam, CT
Many professions have title protection, including doctors, nurses, massage therapists, and others. Social workers are trained in both academic and field work in a range of skills. Social workers have a unique ability to work across settings and with a diverse clientele. They are found in a wide variety of professional settings. Title protection is important in two critical areas: 1) clients receiving services from trained professionals and; 2) protection for those with high degrees of professionalism as embedded in the Code of Ethics.

Michael Marshall, LMSW, Waterford, CT
The Code of Ethics states: Our primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. Works in a supportive recovery house in New Haven with women and men re-entering the community post-incarceration, those who are struggling with chronic homelessness and mental health conditions, those who are looking to reunify their families, those overcoming alcohol and/or drug-related issues, and who are seeking employment opportunities. The specialized social work education received from accredited universities recognized by the Council on Social Work Education made the difference in preparation to work in the field. Please adopt the substitute language submitted by NASW CT.

Dr. Emily McCave, MSW, LMSW, Hamden, CT
Fully supports title protection, but asks that NASW CT language be incorporated into the bill. State law recognizes the confidentiality and privilege of social work records and communications between social worker and a client. Such rights belong to a client, who may be working with a social worker in name only. There is nothing to prevent a worker who
harmed a consumer in another state from repeating that offense in Connecticut. Misuse of the title is not only a form of misrepresentation by the worker, but also the employer.

Amy Myers, LCSW, New Haven, CT
Indicated strong support for the bill as it provides protection for consumers as well as professional protection for practitioners. Title protection should extend to those with a degree in Social Work. Changes in the bill to incorporate language as submitted by NASW CT are recommended.

NASW/CT Diversity Committee
Many members of disenfranchised client populations’ are provided services by agency employees who were given the title of social worker upon hiring. The services are very much needed, but the services may not be from a professionally-trained and educated individual. Language changes to Sec. 20-195w were recommended regarding educational attainment and special provisions for state employed social workers.

Lauren Pease, Hartford, CT
As a student pursuing a UCONN degree and an intern at CWEALF, she agrees that a client should receive the best professional care and highest level of services offered. The bill should take into account a macro social worker not pursuing a LCSW and give as much weight as micro social work counterparts. Excluding someone with a BSW or MSW would be a disservice to social workers who do not practice in the clinical realm.

Shannon Perkins, LMSW, New Haven, CT
Agrees with what has been presented by colleagues as outlined by the NASW/CT Chapter. In addition, she noted that the bill would not cause workers to lose their jobs. The bill would not restrict persons without a social work degree from performing social work service tasks as long as they do not identify themselves as or use the title of social worker.

Herbert Rosenfield, LCSW, ACSW, BCD, CSSW, Adolescent & Family Counseling Center
As a CT Clinical Licensed Social worker and Certified School Social Worker, he favors the bill but finds the current language faulty because it limits the title to those who achieved Connecticut licensure. It is highly important to restrict the title of social worker to those who have completed the coursework and have the ethical foundation for the social work profession.

Steven Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW, NASW/CT Executive Director
The Connecticut Chapter of NASW strongly supports the bill and commends the Labor and Public Employees Committee for raising the bill. The bill reserves the title to those who have earned a baccalaureate or graduate degree in Social Work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education or a doctoral degree in Social Work. Connecticut will join 35 other states that provide this protection to the title classification. Substitute language has been submitted as Sec. 20-195w to include an enforcement provision and how state-employed social workers are to be treated under the bill’s provisions.
NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Marybeth Hill, President, Council 4 AFSCME Local 2663
Represents the majority of workers in the Department of Children and Families, among them, many state social workers. At present, the bill restricts the use of the title to those with educational degrees, which does not adequately account for the vigorous, unique training afforded to DCF workers by the department. If the language exempted state employee social workers, including future hires, the local would not oppose the bill.

Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA)
CHA has concerns with the bill as drafted. CHA believes the bill’s intent is to make modest changes, but may have unintended consequences. CHA offered to work with the committee and NASW CT to address its concerns.

Mag Morelli, President, Leading Age Connecticut
As a state membership association of organizations serving older adults and the disabled, we oppose a bill that requires a master’s degree to use the title. Any attempt to raise the qualifications for all social workers in the state would have ramifications for those currently employed and increase recruitment and retention burdens, as well as costs.

Sal Luciano, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO
The bill is well-intentioned, but does not distinguish between social workers trained and working in state service and those who are academically-trained. Both make significant, positive contributions to society. The bill should exempt state employees.

Lynn Marie Steinmayer, Goshen, CT
The bill in its current form should not be adopted. Many people trained her, but one who stands out has a BSW degree. She is a person of great skill and compassion. Title protection should be extended to all who practice based on their degrees in social work and adherence to a code of ethics.

Reported by: Bryan Anderson Date: 03/28/19