Public Health Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-796
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EXAMINERS.
Vote Date: 2/13/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/4/2019
File No.: 

Disclaimer: The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.

SPONSORS OF BILL:
Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
To re-instates the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) Advisory Committee which ended in 2013. The advisory committee would be responsible for recommending policies and procedures to the Office of Victims Services (OVS) for the SAFE program. The legislation specifies that OVS train SAFE practitioners and prohibits anyone who has not completed a certification program from using the title of “sexual assault forensic examiner”. The bill also allows the Chief Court Administrator to prescribe policies and procedures to implement the SAFE program.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Linda Cimino, Director of Victims Services for the CT Judicial Branch: The Department supports SB 796. This legislation seeks to expand the current Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) training program with the goal of providing greater access to a trained examiner. The bill creates a SAFE Advisory Committee which would recommend policies and procedures regarding a training program to the Office of Victims Services (OVS) with the goal of ensuring statewide consistency in the examination and collection of evidence from victims of sexual assault. The bill also adds a definition of health care facility, clarifies who may use the title Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner, as well as, where medical-forensic examinations and evidence collection may take place.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Hospital Association, (CHA): CHA is pleased to join with the Judicial Department and the Office of Victims Services in supporting the modifications to the SAFE Advisory Committee addressed in this legislation. The changes positively impact the services
provided by Connecticut’s hospitals strengthening our healthcare system as we strive to deliver affordable care to our patients.

Mary Jane Williams, PhD, RN Representing Connecticut Nurses Association (CNA): CNA is in strong support of this legislation that adds their association to the membership of the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) Advisory Committee. Nurses are recognized as being members of a trusted profession that understands and can appropriately address the physical, emotional and legal implications of traumatic experiences such as sexual assault. Nurses play a critical role in providing comprehensive and sensitive care to victims of sexual assault that also preserves the care of physical evidence.

Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations, CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence: The primary purpose of the Alliance is to ensure that victims of sexual assault receive the best possible care with non-judgmental and compassionate support. SB 796 provides this support giving victims greater access to trained examiners while providing uniform and consistent treatment of victims. The Alliance also supports that this legislation gives the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Advisory Committee (SAFE) the flexibility to recommend policies and procedures to the program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None submitted.

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza  Date: 2/19/2019