

Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-829

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO REVIEW VOLUNTARISM NEEDS
Title: OF THE STATE OMBUDSMAN'S NURSING HOME PROGRAM.

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:

The legislation would create a task force to review the State Ombudsman's need for more volunteers for outreach to nursing home residents and would make recommendations to increase the number of volunteers. The members of the task force would be appointed by House and Senate, majority and minority offices, the Ombudsman, Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services and the Executive Director of the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors. The Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appointment the chairpersons of the task force. The task force is directed to submit a report no later than January 1, 2020.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Ms Amy Porter, Commissioner of the Dept. of Rehabilitation Services: They testified in opposition to this proposal. They recognize the great value of volunteers in the Ombudsman program and the importance they have in their efforts to discover, monitor and address any issues of abuse in the facilities in the state. They do believe that the agency itself can report back to the legislature next year on any improvements that could assist in recruiting more volunteers so the proposal is not necessary at this time.

Mairead Painter, Dept. of Rehabilitation Services, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program: While they think the bill is well intentioned they are unable to support a task force study. She has been working to increase the number of Resident Advocates and she must

balance the recruitment with the availability of resources within the program and the time it takes to train, mentor and certify a Resident Advocate to their federal standards.

One of the challenges they face is that once trained and brought on the program, volunteers do not stay long. In the fall they recruited and trained two new Resident Advocates both of whom resigned shortly after completing the initial training and shadowing experience. She points out that the Resident Advocate is a demanding volunteer position and it requires a special type of person. They are happy to explore and accept ideas to expand the Resident Advocate program but they don't feel the proposed bill will accomplish this goal.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senator Cathy Osten, Nineteenth District: The Senator offered testimony in support of this legislation. She has met with a number of nursing home residents and determined that more Resident Volunteers are needed to reach more nursing home residents. One resident with 15 years as a volunteer noted that in 2013 there were 156 volunteers, 20 in 2016 and at present only 12 and that this group must cover about 229 nursing homes and 24,000 residents. This position requires 4 days of intensive training, a monthly report to the Ombudsman and a check list that must be followed. A task force could study the ways in which this position is being advertised and how to continue reaching out to recruit in more effective ways. She also noted that the training is only held in Hartford which is inconvenient for many who might be interested and some are not even notified if their application has been received. She also thought that a task force might be an effective way to study volunteerism needs.

Representative Kathleen McCarty, 38th Assembly District: The Representative offered testimony in support of this proposal and pointed out that there are over 20,000 nursing home residents in the state and that many do not receive regular visits from family and friends. They have no one to confide in about the type of care that they are receiving and no one to safeguard their rights.

The Volunteer Residents Advocates Program was developed according to the Dept. of Aging to provide consultation and complaint resolution for residents of nursing facilities, residential care home and assisted living facilities. The volunteers provide assistance to residents in nursing facilities and they are trained by the state to protect and listen to the complaints and concerns of residents. In the past there were more than 150 volunteers in its program and today there are less than 15 volunteers. She recommends that the Ombudsman plan to increase participation in the program and feels that the task force could be used to enhance the plan that is developed.

Donald Madura, Volunteer Resident Advocate, Waterford: He submitted testimony in support of this bill and points out that there are now only 12 advocates that serve a nursing home population of about 21,300 residents. When he began in 2001 there were 158 VRS's throughout the state of Connecticut. The Regional Ombudsmen are paid staff, overseeing the program and supervising the VRS's with each being assigned 30 nursing homes plus assisted living facilities. They respond to call-in complaints and do not have the time to handle the number of daily issues handled by the VRA's. He has provided a summation of VRA staffing and a job description of a Volunteer Resident Advocate for review.

Volunteer Resident Advocate Data: This data concerning Volunteer Resident Advocate was submitted in support of this bill. It includes a comparison of the States of Connecticut and New Mexico, the job description of the Volunteer Resident Advocate, the contribution an RVA makes to the Long term Care Ombudsman Program and the 2018 list of Advocates for 2018 and a list of the number of nursing homes and the number of residential beds in those homes.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No testimony Submitted

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

Date: 3/1/19