Committee on Children

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-891
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE FAILURE TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT.
Vote Date: 3/7/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/28/2019
File No.: 

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:
To restructure statutes associated with the failure to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner-Designate, Department of Children and Families:
The commissioner testified in favor of this bill because mandated reporters are greatly responsible for keeping children in Connecticut safe. Increasing the list of professions of mandated reporters over the past few years has immensely improved response to abuse and neglect by the Department and this bill would only continue the improvements.

State of Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice:
The Division of Criminal Justice submitted testimony respectfully recommending JFS language to address a few concerns. The main concern of the Division is that this bill would repeal the requirement of DCF to promptly notify the Chief State’s Attorney and allow DCF to conduct an internal investigation, which the Division believes would make a now difficult situation significantly more taxing. Secondly, it is believed that there is no need to change the current requirement of notifying the proper law enforcement agency to require just the Chief State’s Attorney to receive the initial report. It is possible that this could create a delay in the investigation process, if deemed necessary or it could allow a report to be overlooked. Furthermore, the Division pointed out a possible loophole for private schools in current statute that should be corrected with this bill. Lastly, the Division supports the language change that would apply this to not only delayed reports, but also a complete failure of
reporting. The Division is willing to work with DCF and the Children's Committee to address concerns.

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch:
The Judicial Branch supports this bill, but would like clarification on if DCF or the Judicial Branch would be ordering participation in an education and training program if found in violation of subsection (d). The Judicial Branch expressed if this will in fact be a court-ordered program that the Branch would need an understanding of what the training would entail and time to advise the judges of the program. Furthermore, it is suggested that language be added to address if it will be court-ordered and punishment if an individual is non-compliant.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Ray Rossomando, Director of Policy, Research and Government Relations, Connecticut Education Association:
CEA submitted testimony in support of this bill. However, the director believes this bill could punish teachers who are late in reporting by a few hours although the bill is obviously intended to reprimand individuals with more severe violations.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Mikhela Hull Date: 3/14/19