

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5333

AN ACT CONCERNING THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND
Title: PREVENTION YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY.

Vote Date: 3/10/2020

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/3/2020

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the Office of the Child Advocate create additional questions assessing the risk to youth victims of sexual abuse or assault. These questions will be added to the Youth Risk Survey that is administered by the Department of Public Health. This bill would also require any school that is chosen to participate in the survey.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Renée D. Coleman-Mitchell; Commissioner, Department of Public Health

The Department of Public Health supports this bill. The Department has been conducting this survey since 2005 and in that time results have been low due to a lack of participation. This survey is a great local and national tool used for identifying the needs of students allowing for the development of programs that promote healthy behaviors in the young people of our state. This legislation would positively impact health equity, the survey collects demographic information that allows data to be analyzed to identify health disparities across genders, races, Hispanic ethnicity and sexual minorities. The Department does request the following language changes:

- Line 6: "The department shall randomly select the high schools that shall participate in the survey in any school year." We recommend this read as follows: "The department shall administer the survey to public high schools selected at random by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and such high schools shall participate in the survey in the school year in which they are selected.
- Line 10: "The department shall provide guidance to the local or regional board of education for each high school selected to participate in the survey relating to (1) best

practices for administering the survey, (2) the timeframe for completion of the survey, and (3) the process by which the results of such survey are to be submitted to the department.” o We recommend that subdivision (1) read as follows: “(1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention required protocol for administering the survey in a random selection of classrooms”

- They recommend inserting this language after line 12: “The survey shall be anonymous and administered in a manner designed to protect students' privacy. The Department shall require a selected school to utilize passive parental consent before administering the survey.”

The Department does not support the language on lines 20-25 because it conflicts with the Center for Disease Controls approved policy for this survey. They suggest the following;

- On Line 23, regarding questions developed by the Child Advocate:
 1. “Such questions shall be included as part of the Connecticut School Health Survey administered pursuant to section 1 of this act.”
 2. The content of the CT YRBS must meet CDC criteria, and preference is given to an official list of approved optional questions released by the CDC for each survey year. Any state-designed questions must be submitted to the CDC for approval.
 3. The Department welcomes representatives from the Office of the Child Advocate to be an active member of the survey planning process to propose state-added YRBS questions to the CDC.

Sarah Eagan, Office of the Child Advocate

The Office of Child Advocate is testifying in support of this legislation. The Youth Risk Behavior Study is an amazing tool used to a gain better understanding of the health, including mental health, and behaviors of adolescent students. Connecticut's rate of participation in the survey is decent but could be better. It is important that Connecticut begin to collect baseline data regarding youth victimization or youth concerns regarding adult sexual misconduct.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence supports this bill. Gathering this information helps in prevention programs and is a critical step in highlighting the importance of the issue among youth. Adding questions will also help shine light on the topic, making it seem less taboo among adolescents.

Steven Rogers, Director of Emergency Mental Health Services and Attending Physician at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center

Supports this legislation and considers good data to be important in identifying the social and emotional needs of youth. Increasing the amount of schools that participate in the survey will help direct resources to areas where they are most helpful.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education opposes this potential legislation. Boards of Education already have policies in place for participating in surveys that do not compromise the time spent learning.

Reported by: Peter Murszewski

Date: 4/11/2020