

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-75

**Title:** AN ACT PERMITTING PERSONS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD TO DONATE BLOOD.

**Vote Date:** 3/4/2020

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/26/2020

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Public Health Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

SB-75 permits persons sixteen years old to donate blood with the written consent of a parent or guardian. The bill was proposed to help remedy the chronic blood shortage across Connecticut.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None Expressed.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Representative Mitch Bolinsky, 106<sup>th</sup> District, Connecticut General Assembly:** In his testimony, Representative Bolinsky voices his support for SB-75. He argues that SB-75 accomplishes an important and urgent task: helping to reduce the chronic blood shortage in Connecticut. He found that Connecticut must supplement their blood supply with shipments from other states. Outlining the difficulties the bill had passing in previous sessions, he hopes that the fourth attempt will be different. Representative Bolinsky reminds the committee where his advocacy on the bill began, with constituent Harrison Eppers and Newtown High School. He concludes by urging the committee to support SB-75.

**Mackenzie Baysinger, MSW Student, University of Connecticut:** In her testimony Ms. Baysinger expresses her support for SB-75. She shares the story of her younger brother who was diagnosed with childhood bone cancer and needed several blood transfusions. She also recounts her experience following the Nevada mass shooting and the urgent need for blood

donations that followed. She concludes by urging the committee to vote for SB-75 to "work toward the betterment for vulnerable populations."

**The Connecticut Hospital Association:** The Connecticut Hospital Association submitted testimony in support of SB-75. Connecticut Hospitals rely on blood donations to care for their patients and argue that those who donate blood from a young age are more likely to continue to donate throughout their life. This bill could increase Connecticut's blood supply in both the short and long term.

**Michael Enaye, Constituent of Newtown, Blood Drive Coordinator:** Mr. Enaye voices his support of SB-75, Harrison Eppers and Newtown High School, and disappointment in the fact that the bill has not passed sooner. He argues that if the bill is not passed this session, several vulnerable populations will be hurt. People sixteen years old may donate blood in forty-seven other states. Mr. Enaye finds this discrepancy to be arbitrary and restrictive and urges the Public Health Committee to support and protect SB-75.

**Emmanuel Wilford, Constituent of Newtown:** Mr. Wilford recounts his inability to donate blood as a sixteen-year-old at the Newtown High School blood drive last year. Sixteen-year-olds could make up ten percent of the blood-donating population. Mr. Wilford argues that sixteen-year-olds may become organ donors, work, and drive a car. In his words, "how can we give a 16-year-old the right to decide if they want to help people while they're dead but not while they are alive?" Mr. Wilford emphasizes the need for this bill and the detrimental consequences Connecticut residents will face if SB-75 is not passed.

**Harrison Eppers, Constituent of Newtown:** Mr. Eppers fully supports SB-75, recounting his experience coordinating the Newtown High School blood drive and the large number of students who had to be turned away because of their age. He expresses support on behalf of his mother and those whose lives depend on the Connecticut blood supply and believes that young people will wholeheartedly support this effort.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Joseph Tine IV, Collection Technician II and President, AFSCME Local 3145:** Mr. Tine and the members of AFSCME Local 3145 oppose SB-75 because they believe blood donation imposes an undue risk on adolescents. They argue that teenagers are more at risk for iron deficiencies and other donation-related injuries. In addition, Connecticut law currently does not require trained medical professionals to be on site at blood drives. Mr. Tine and his organization believe this practice puts donors, especially higher-risk teenagers, at an even greater risk. If this bill moves forward, they request that it be amended to prohibit consignment payments, mandate a registered or licensed practical nurse be on site, and require that sixteen-year-olds receive an informational form from the Department of Public Health before any blood donation.

**Reported by: Hannah Lauer**

**Date: 03/11/2020**