

# Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-108

**Title:** AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OPEN CHOICE VOUCHERS PILOT PROGRAM.

**Vote Date:** 3/5/2020

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/18/2020

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Housing Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Hundreds of Hartford families opt to participate in the Open Choice school desegregation program, a voluntary program enabling Hartford children to attend schools in suburban districts. Many of these families qualify for tenant-based vouchers, and studies, surveys and interview data reveal that many low-income residents of disinvested communities are interested in moving to high opportunity towns; yet, without the government assistance provided by these vouchers, many recipients cannot afford to do so.

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

Commissioner Miguel A. Cardona – State Department of Education – supports this bill and believes this proposal promotes housing choices for families who have already made the determination to send their child to a district participating in the Open Choice Program. It seeks to give those families the opportunity to benefit the next generation by raising their children in the district in which they attend school and it takes positive steps toward alleviating the poverty concentration in urban settings.

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

Rep. Susan Johnson – 48<sup>th</sup> House of Representatives - supports this bill and helps our state follow the courts determination in the Sheff vs O'Neill case in that our schools should not be segregated.

Erin Boggs, Executive Director of the Open Communities Alliance (OCA) supports this bill which gives housing voucher holders greater choice in where they live and address the fact that Connecticut is one of the most racially segregated states in the nation.

Erin Kemple – Executive Director at the CT Fair Housing Center – supports allocating rental assistance certificates to families living in racially concentrated high poverty areas who have elected to pursue educational opportunities for their children in the choice program – the State of CT can guarantee meaningful housing choices for these families.

Raphael Podolosky – CT Legal Service – supports this bill so that some families of students who attend school out-of-district through an interdistrict school choice program could afford to live in the town where their child goes to school. Another benefit of the pilot is that it will reach the very households likely to be most interested in moving to a suburban town, while simultaneously opening a slot for another child in Open Choice.

Craig Miner – AICP – Town Planner – Newington, CT – supports this bill because it will allow people of color / low income to get out of low opportunity neighborhoods.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Stated.

**Reported by: Karen Godbout**

**Date: 3/6/2020**