Public Health Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 14, 2020

10:30 AM in Room 1D of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 10:41 am by Chairman, Rep. Steinberg J. 136.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Anwar S. S03; Daugherty Abrams M. S13; Lesser M. S09

Representatives: Arnone T. 058; Betts W. 078; Borer D. 115; Candelora V. 086; Carpino C. 032; Comey R. 102; Cook M. 065; Demicco M. 021; Genga H. 010; Hennessy J. 127; Klarides-Ditria N. 105; McCarty K. 038; Michel D. 146; Petit W. 022; Ryan K. 139; Steinberg J. 136; Young P. 120; Zupkus L. 089

Absent were:

Senators: Somers H. S18

Representatives: Kennedy K. 119; Scanlon S. 098; Tercyak P. 026

Rep. Steinberg convened the meeting at 10:41am.

Rep Steinberg introduced the co-chairs and asked for any introductory remarks. There were none.

Rep. Steinberg introduced Section III of the agenda, Bills for Review, and asked for a motion to raise Concepts #1-7 with a voice vote.

Sen. Abrams offered the motion and it was seconded by Rep. Petit.

Rep. Steinberg asked for a voice vote which passed unanimously.
Rep. Steinberg stated that Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers would be raised through a roll call vote.

Rep. Steinberg asked for a motion to raise Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers for a roll call vote.

Sen. Abrams offered the motion and it was seconded by Sen. Lesser.

Rep. Betts remarked that these controversial bills did not comply with the time constraint of the short session nor the requirement that raised bills be fiscal in nature during a short session.

Rep. Steinberg stated that the committee has had an additional year to collect evidence on aid in dying and the growing shift in public opinion.

Rep. Steinberg also stated that the Public Health Committee cannot shy away from controversial topics as it is the committee's duty to protect the public health of Connecticut citizens. He added that suggesting the committee is raising too many bills in a short session would set a bad precedent.

Sen. Abrams remarked that she had constituents concerned that Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying did not pass out of committee in the last session.

Rep. Betts noted that in a short session it is also in the public's best interest to avoid many controversial topics, as they must take time out of their days to come and testify.

Rep. Steinberg countered that other committees are following the same practice as Public Health and not strictly raising bills of a fiscal nature.

Rep. Candelora stated that he does not normally vote against raising bills but plans to vote no due to the intended nature of the short session and its intended focus on bills of a fiscal nature. He added that when committees raise too many bills, they are often not well done and lose sight of the priorities of Connecticut Citizens.

Rep. Candelora added that a lot of time and thought went into the drafting of H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT CONCERNING IMMUNIZATIONS over the summer that was undone. He added that Public Health is traditionally a bipartisan and uncontroversial committee and is concerned about the tone raising Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers would set in committee and on the House floor.

Rep. Steinberg stated that he hoped the public hearing on tolls would not be a long conversation and added that the short session evolved to encompass more than fiscal bills long before his time as a State Representative.

Rep. Steinberg added that the Public Health Committee is exceptional, passing around twenty bills per session. He further countered that the Committee should leverage the calendar as much as possible, and that there is no way around the large amount of public testimony bound to come out of controversial public hearings.
Rep. Steinberg noted how proud he is of the bipartisan progress made on **H.B. No. 5044** AN ACT CONCERNING IMMUNIZATIONS. He added that the bill included concepts no other state has ever tried to implement and urged the committee members to believe in the public hearing process, noting that the bill may change as a result of it. He concluded his remarks by noting that there is a lot of controversy surrounding this bill but that it is the Committee's responsibility to take on controversial issues.

Rep. Hennessey remarked that the only two constants in life were death and taxes and that Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying involves compassion. He added that raising Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying would provide Connecticut citizens with the dignity to decide how to end their life. He concluded that he would be proud if our state could pass Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and that many citizens are and will leave the state if it is not.

Rep. Cook noted the value of public hearings and found that the concerns of some members of the committee were not being heard. She added that she leaves personal opinions at the door and makes decisions based on her constituents.

Rep. Cook remarked that until people truly change, outcomes do not change. She expressed her continued concern over raising Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and argued that further clarification was needed with regard to insurance policies, the "90 pill issue", and the completion of the lawsuit in Hartford.

Rep. Cook concluded that she will vote against Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers on the floor of the House. She recommended that all caucuses meet before the public hearings on these two issues and move forward only if they are supported.


Rep. Borer also remarked that she would vote against raising Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying.

Rep. Borer prefaced her comment by noting that her mother, father, brother and best friend recently passed from tragic illnesses and that her comments are not based on religion or timing.

Rep. Borer commented that Connecticut is working heard to address and reduce suicide rates among teens and veterans, and that raising Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying would send a mixed message to Connecticut citizens. She concluded that it is not a good time to raise Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and that this concept should be considered at a later time.

Rep. Comey expressed her discomfort with raising Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying due to personal experience and constituents that have left Connecticut and the United States over this issue. She concluded by expressing her support for a public hearing but noted that she would not vote to move this issue out of committee.

Rep. Steinberg stated that the chairs of the Public Health Committee desire public hearings on Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers. He reminded the committee that the
bills could change as a result of public hearings, and that the vote to move Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying and Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers out if committee would come later in the process.

Rep. Steinberg noted his appreciation of the heartfelt comments made at the meeting today.

Rep. Steinberg announced that voting would remain open until 5pm.

Beverley Henry conducted the roll call vote for Concept #8. AAC Aid in Dying.

Rep. Steinberg remarked that the flu was going around the building and noted Rep. Kennedy’s absence.

Rep. Steinberg asked for a motion to roll call vote on Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

Sen. Abrams offered the motion and it was seconded by Rep. Michel.

Beverley Henry conducted the roll call vote for Concept #9. AAC Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Services Pregnancy Centers.

Rep. Steinberg noted that the vote would be kept open until 5pm.

Sen. Abrams remarked that Rep. Petit left to speak at a press conference and prompted other members of the committee to join him in support.

Rep. Steinberg announced that the next meeting would be the Public Hearing on Wednesday, February 19th in Hearing Room 2E and recommended that his fellow committee members prepare for an extended day.

A motion was duly made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5 pm.

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Beverley Henry               Hannah Lauer
Administrator                Assistant Committee Clerk