Public Health Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 21, 2020

10:30 AM in Room 2D of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 10:40 AM by Chairman, Rep. Steinberg J. 136.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Anwar S. S03; Daugherty Abrams M. S13; Lesser M. S09; Somers H. S18

Representatives: Arnone T. 058; Betts W. 078; Borer D. 115; Candelora V. 086; Carpino C. 032; Comey R. 102; Demicco M. 021; Genga H. 010; Hennessy J. 127; Kennedy K. 119; Klarides-Ditria N. 105; McCarty K. 038; Michel D. 146; Petit W. 022; Ryan K. 139; Scanlon S. 098; Steinberg J. 136; Young P. 120; Zupkus L. 089

Absent were:

Senators:

Representatives: Cook M. 065; Tercyak P. 026

Rep Steinberg welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Co-Chair Sen. Abrams.

Rep. Steinberg explained that the committee would be taking a brief recess.

Rep. Steinberg reconvened at 11:00 AM. and asked if anyone had any remarks.

Sen. Abrams welcomed everyone and hoped all were well-rested following the recent exceptionally long public hearing. She appreciated everyone’s involvement and hard work.
Rep. Steinberg explained that this was the final meeting for the Public Health committee to raise bills in this short session. He explained that, for this reason, the committee had received a request to add three additional concepts to raise not currently on the agenda.

Rep. Steinberg asked for a motion to add these concepts to the agenda under section III.

Sen. Abrams made the motion and it was seconded by Rep. Scanlon.

Sen. Abrams read the three additional concepts: AAC A Patient Navigator, AAC Connecticut Blood Safety and AAC The Scope of Practice of Physicians Assistants.

Rep. Scanlon asked for clarification on the concept of a Patient Navigator and whether this would pertain to the substance abuse situations such as opioid abuse.

Rep. Steinberg explained that this is an emerging job role that would coordinate the care plan for an individual in various situations including substance abuse and would facilitate an expedient care plan.

Rep. Betts expressed a concern about process and questioned why these concepts were not reviewed in screening.

Rep. Steinberg explained that these bills had been reviewed in various forms during the screening process but lacked enough information to move at that time. He admitted this is unusual, but the committee had recently received more information and decided to move these bills for a public hearing.

Rep. Betts again expressed his feelings regarding issues that should be considered in the short session and believes that the committee is not adhering to the rules by introducing these bills. He clarified that he was not referring to the merits of these bills, but rather the timing for considering them during a short session.

Rep. Steinberg appreciated Rep. Betts’ position and admits this is unusual but, due to the nature of the topics considered by the committee, we do not have the luxury of waiting for a year to address some of these public health issues. Rep. Steinberg acknowledged that this conversation has occurred before and looks forward to a continuing dialogue.

Rep. Steinberg asked for other comments. Hearing none, he asked for a voice vote to add these items, which he designated as items #22, 23 and 24, to section III of the agenda, Concepts to be Raised.

Sen. Abrams then made a motion to raise Items # 1-24 on the agenda and it was seconded by Rep. Young.

Rep. Steinberg asked for any comments.

Rep. Betts objected to the motion and indicated that he had questions on several of the concepts to be raised. He indicated that a number of them had been addressed in the previous year and had had a public hearing. He wanted to know if any additional information had been provided to the committee to indicate that they would be acted
upon this year. His objective being to focus the committee’s limited time on issues that would likely be acted upon.


Rep. Betts indicated that he would like to, but would yield to the choice of the committee.

Rep. Candelora opined that the committee could vote to raise the bills as a block and then open the discussion on each bill.

Rep. Steinberg indicated that the committee would discuss each bill individually.


Rep. Steinberg asked for any other comments.

Rep. Carpino asked why the committee was considering a bill involving asbestos and wanted to understand why this bill was not in the Environment committee.

Rep. Steinberg explained that the committee has previously acted on asbestos bills and that the effects of asbestos on the public health is an ongoing issue which supports the issue being addressed in this committee. Rep. Carpino indicated that her understanding is if a concept is raised it does not guarantee that it will have a public hearing. Since the committee is addressing such detailed concepts, it should be clear that the issue is being addressed in the appropriate committee.

Rep. Steinberg recognized this concern and indicated that he would be glad to have a conversation following the meeting.

Rep. McCarty asked for clarification of item #20, AA Requiring Notification for Family of Patients Admitted within a Certain Period of Time.

Sen. Abrams explained that currently in statute a patient may request that a primary care provider be notified if the person is admitted as a patient. This bill would expand that notification to include family. Sen. Abrams also pointed out that anyone notified is controlled by the patient.

Rep. Klarides-Ditria asked for clarification on item #9, AAC Surgical Smoke in the Operating Room.

Rep. Steinberg explained that this issue was recently brought to the attention of the committee. There is a concern that some hospitals and medical facilities lack the necessary ventilation and protocols to address smoke that is generated by certain surgical procedures resulting in potential harm to health care workers. By raising this bill, the committee will highlight the issue and the extent to which it is a potential concern.

Rep. Betts requested clarification on a number of these concepts. He began with questions concerning item #1, AA Prohibiting an Unauthorized Pelvic Examination on a Female Who is Under Deep Sedation or Anesthesia or Unconscious. He indicated that the committee had addressed this issue last session and wondered why we were considering it again.
Rep. Steinberg explained that hospitals did address the issue with certain procedures and protocols, but a recent article, as well as comments from colleagues indicate that further efforts may be needed to address the issue to ensure we do not have concerns in Connecticut.

Rep. Betts questioned why the committee was again considering item # 5, AAC Intersex Persons.

Sen. Abrams explained that this bill was voted out of committee last session, but was not voted on by the Senate. Since last session, the Department of Motor Vehicles has introduced an option for people to choose a designation other than male or female on their driver’s license and as a committee we may wish to examine other areas where such choices may apply. Also, part of the bill last session was to form a study group and perhaps we might address this again.


Sen. Abrams explained that a hospital in our state is requiring certain cognitive tests be administered to physicians 70 years of age and over. Currently, it is being viewed as an example of age discrimination. The concept in this bill is that if a hospital is requiring such testing, then it should be applied more broadly and not target a particular age group.

Rep. Betts expressed his belief that the individual hospitals should address this issue administratively and questioned if passing legislation is the appropriate way to handle this issue.

Rep. Steinberg recognized this is a new topic. The issue raised by Rep. Betts did come up during discussions and does require more investigating.

Sen. Abrams added that this issue, along with others, came to the committee very late. Recognizing that this is the committee's last day to raise bills, they felt that these issues deserved to be examined further so as not to miss an opportunity to examine important issues.

Rep. Steinberg asked for additional comments.

Sen. Somers again expressed her concern about this being a short session and addressing so many issues that are clearly out of the scope of the short session. Many of these issues have been addressed by the committee multiple times. We are clearly being unfair and performing a disservice to the public who wish to engage regarding issues important to them but are unable to take the time to come to the hearings due to work and family responsibility. Also, as a committee, we should not be basing our decisions on newspaper articles or mimicking the actions of other states. Sen. Somers indicated that she would vote to pass these bills out of committee but reserve the right not to vote to pass them.

Rep. Steinberg appreciates Sen. Somers position and does recognize the work being taken on this session but believes it is in the best interests of the citizens of our state.
At Sen. Somers request, Rep. Steinberg read each of the 24 concepts to be raised in section III of the agenda. Then asked for a motion to have a voice vote on the items in section III of the agenda. Sen. Abrams made the motion and it was seconded by Rep. Young.


Rep. Steinberg announced that the next meeting of the committee would be Monday, February 24th at 10:30 AM in Room 1D of the LOB.

Also, the committee will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, February 26th in Room 1D of the LOB. The committee will be informed of the time at the end of the day.

Rep. Steinberg announced that Rep. Cook missed the meeting due to family business out of state.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

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Beverley Henry         Kathleen Panazza
Administrator          Committee Clerk