Public Health Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

10:30 AM in Room 1D of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 10:34 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; Cook M. 065; 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; Tercyak P. 026; Young P. 120; Zupkus L. 089

Absent were:

Senators: None

Representatives: None

Rep. Steinberg introduced himself and invited comments from the other chairs, co-chairs, and ranking members. There were none.

Rep Steinberg introduced the first item on the agenda, S.B. No. 75 (RAISED) AN ACT PERMITTING PERSONS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD TO DONATE BLOOD for JF action. He asked for a motion to JF to the floor.

Rep. Cook offered the motion and it was seconded by Sen. Abrams.
Rep. Steinberg opened discussion on the bill.

Rep. Demicco remarked that he has concerns regarding the bill. He stated that the bill has been heard several times before and he voted against it in past sessions because of testimony that younger people are more likely to have adverse effects when donating blood. He also cited testimony regarding the availability of medical providers in schools.

Rep Petit countered that the Red Cross has very fastidious regulations in terms of height, weight, hemoglobin, etc. regarding blood donations to ensure the safety of participants and screen people at risk of adverse events.

Rep. Borer shared a conversation she had this morning with one of the proponents of the bill who is willing to adjust the language to address some of the concerns expressed by other committee members. She expressed her excitement for the bill and for continuing the conversation.

Rep. Steinberg shared in that sentiment.

Rep. Klarides-Ditria added that there is often an unwritten rule in schools that students may not compete in sports 24 hours following blood donation.

Rep. Steinberg asked for other comments. There were none. He then asked for a roll call vote.

Total voting = 25, those voting yea = 21, those voting nay = 4, absent = 0.

Rep. Steinberg reminded the committee that votes would remain open until 1 pm. He then introduced the second item on the agenda, S.B. No. 140 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING FREE FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT BATHROOMS. He asked for a motion to JFS the bill to the floor.

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

Rep. Steinberg asked for comments on the bill.

Rep. Klarides-Ditria remarked that the bill is an unfunded mandate and that menstrual hygiene products are available in nurses' offices and accessible to all who need them in her district. She also commented that for every 1,000 students, the cost would be $45,000 over nine months. As an athletic trainer, she commented that she makes these products available in her office. She stated her caution on the language of the bill.

Rep. Petit concurred with the remarks of Rep. Klarides-Ditria and the concerns of others regarding the mandate and the legislative process that might mean the bill would have to pass through other committees. He also has monetary concerns but will vote to move the bill forward.

Rep. Steinberg countered that having to go to the nurse's office instead of the restroom to obtain menstrual hygiene products is a significant issue for some people and cited monetary and procedural concerns.
Rep. Candelora indicated that he would vote no on moving the bill forward due to a need for more specific language. He remarked that it would be disastrous to place a tampon machine in male middle school bathrooms. He argued that the boards of education should be given more discretion.

Sen. Abrams argued that the language was written precisely to give different school districts the flexibility they need. She agreed that the language requires another look to ensure it is accomplishing what it needs to. She acknowledged that there is a fiscal concern with this bill, but that the cost of sending a message to young women that their biological needs are just as important as other such needs is more important.

Rep. Petit argued that several people came forward and claimed that their nurse's station was in a central location and bathrooms are available. He argued ambiguous language that grants various interpretations is the best way to move forward with this bill.

Rep. Klarides-Ditria asked if it is up to the individual boards of education to decide where, and how many bathrooms had to be supplied with menstrual hygiene products as required by this bill.

Sen. Abrams reiterated that the language of the bill should be examined again to ensure the necessary flexibility is given. Speaking as a former educator, she argued that every school operates and is set up differently. She agreed flexibility in the language is necessary.

Rep. Comey cautioned the committee on making assumptions on school procedures regarding bathroom access. She argued that in her district, due to vaping there is only one bathroom open at the high school. She found that bathrooms are also often shut down for maintenance reasons.

Sen. Somers explained that she will be voting against the bill partly because of unclear language. She remarked that schools in her district feel the bill is an unfunded mandate, and over-regulation by the Connecticut General Assembly. She felt that this bill should be in the Education Committee and asked why this issue needs a bill. She argued that this problem can be addressed through the State Department of Education. She remarked that the bill needs a lot more work.

Rep. Steinberg countered that the intent of the bill is clear and would be surprised if the Education Committee did not weigh in on this issue.

Rep. Zupkus argued that period poverty is not an issue in her district, even in her hometown Prospect where the poverty level is at 30%. She claimed the bill is an unfunded mandate and should be left to individual boards of education.

Rep. Steinberg urged everyone to vote for the bill to continue the conversation and believes that the bill addresses a public health issue and is worthy of this committee's consideration.

Rep. Ryan shared that he will vote to move the bill forward, but has some reservations concerning the likelihood of vandalism in school bathrooms should this bill become law.
Rep. Kennedy acknowledged the importance of the bill and noted that it is already being done at the schools in her district. She also had questions about how this bill would affect the current system in her school. She also expressed concerns regarding the unfunded mandate.

Rep. Steinberg asked for any other questions or comments. There were none and he requested a roll call vote.

Total voting = 25, those voting yea = 18, those voting nay = 7, absent = 0.

Rep. Steinberg reminded the committee that votes will remain open till 1 pm. He moved to the third item on the agenda, S.B. No. 141 (RAISED) AN ACT DESIGNATING THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES A SINGLE HEALTH CARE ENTITY.

Rep. Steinberg asked for a motion to JF the bill to the floor.

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

Rep. Steinberg asked for questions or comments. There were none and he requested a roll call vote.

Total voting = 25, those voting yea = 25, those voting nay = 0, absent = 0.

Rep. Steinberg introduced the fourth item on the agenda, S.B. No. 143 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING COVENANTS NOT TO COMPETE INVOLVING PHYSICIANS. He asked for a motion to JF the bill to the floor.

Sen. Somers offered the motion and it was seconded by Sen. Anwar.

Sen. Anwar shared the difficulty Connecticut residents experience trying to find a new internal medicine doctor and to schedule an appointment. He remarked that the bill will help with this issue, and that every Connecticut resident should have a quality, well-trained primary care physician.

Sen. Abrams concurred with Sen. Anwar. She commented on the need for better quality and better access to physicians in Connecticut. She believes this is a step in the right direction.

Sen. Somers echoed the comments of Sen. Abrams and Sen. Anwar and remarked that Connecticut is one of the very few states that still has non-competes in their medical systems.

Rep. Demicco expressed concerns in trying to strike a balance between physician autonomy and investing in training physicians. He reintroduced testimony that outlines the changes the Connecticut General Assembly made in 2016 regarding non-competes and remarked that 2020 is only four years later. He read a small quote of the testimony and echoed the sentiment.
Rep. Steinberg countered that four years in healthcare is a long time. He agreed with Rep. Demicco’s remark about balance and supports a conversation on responsible ways to address this concern.

Rep. Borer expressed her support for the bill and believes anything that restricts access to physicians is not good for Connecticut patients and communities.

Sen. Somers added that this bill also addresses physicians that have been absorbed by larger hospitals and may choose to leave after a year if given a contract much worse than the one initially offered. She also added that no states in the surrounding areas have medical non-competes and that non-competes in the corporate world do not have a geographic component.

Rep. Steinberg asked for questions or comments. There were none and he requested a roll call vote.

Total voting = 25, those voting yea = 19, those voting nay = 6, absent = 0.

Rep Steinberg introduced the fifth item on the agenda, S.B. No. 146 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING REVISIONS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH STATUTES. He asked for a roll call vote to JF the bill to the floor.

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

Rep. Steinberg asked for questions or comments. There were none and he requested a roll call vote.

Total voting = 25, those voting yea = 25, those voting nay = 0, absent = 0.

Rep. Steinberg introduced the sixth item on the agenda, H.B. No. 5180 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF CATERED FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN FUNERAL HOMES and asked for a motion to JFS to the floor.

Sen. Anwar offered the motion and it was seconded by Rep. Young.

Rep. Demicco asked for clarification on the changes made by the proposed substitute language.

Sen. Abrams argued that the bill still makes the participation of funeral homes optional. However, the funeral homes that decide to opt in must comply with the Department of Public Health's regulations. She further explained that the bill clarified that food may not be served in the same room as the deceased.

Sen. Anwar argued that 49 other states have similar legislation, so it is about time that Connecticut allows families to be nourished while grieving.

Rep. Demicco countered that as indicated in testimony, this bill would create an undue burden on small businesses. He again read a small excerpt from the testimony and claimed that the opposition on this bill gave him some reservations.
Rep. Steinberg argued that this question was asked during the public hearing and a gentleman testified that competition was not an issue. He reminded Rep. Demicco that this program is voluntary.

Rep. Arnone revealed that funeral homes in his district have personally contacted him on this issue and they believe this bill is crucial for the future of funeral homes.

Rep. Steinberg asked for questions or comments. There were none and he requested a roll call vote.

Total voting = 25, those voting yea = 25, those voting nay = 0, absent = 0.

Rep. Steinberg introduced the seventh and final item on the agenda, H.B. No. 5183 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE FEE FOR A CREMATION PERMIT. He requested a motion to JF the bill to the floor.

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

Rep. Steinberg argued that research was done with the Chief Medical Examiner’s office to examine the fiscal impact of waving the permit fees and found it to be modest to negligible.

Total voting = 25, those voting yea = 25, those voting nay = 0, absent = 0.

Rep. Steinberg reminded the committee that voting will be held open till 1 pm and listed the dates and times of the upcoming public hearings. The next public hearing will be Friday, March 6, 2020 at 11:00 am in Room 1D. The following public hearing will be Monday, March 9, 2020 at 10:30 am in Room 1D. He recessed the meeting at 11:08 am.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 1 pm.