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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **SB 817 (File 16, as amended by Senate "A")\***

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR CENTERS.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill establishes a 14-member statewide senior center working group to develop a coordinated plan for senior centers and municipal services for seniors. It also requires the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity, within available appropriations, to assist senior centers and assign or appoint necessary personnel to do so.

By law, municipalities must appoint a municipal agent for the elderly to help seniors learn about community resources and file for benefits. The bill expands the list of potential appointees to include senior center staff members. Current law limits potential appointees to (1) members of a municipal agency that serves the elderly or (2) municipal residents with a demonstrated interest in the elderly or who have been involved in aging programs.

The bill also authorizes any one or more municipalities, or private organizations that serve older adults and are designated to act as agents of one or more municipalities, to establish a “multipurpose senior center,” which is a community facility that organizes and provides a broad spectrum of senior services, including recreational activities and health (including mental and behavioral health), social, nutritional, and educational services (42 U.S.C. § 3002).

Additionally, the bill expands the scope of the state’s Community Response Education Program to include resources for community programs and education on senior sexual assault and abuse safety, prevention, and risk reduction. This program, within available appropriations, offers certain resources to neighborhoods and municipalities that are notified that a registered sex offender is living

there or plans to do so.

Lastly, the bill makes technical changes.

\*Senate Amendment "A" adds the provision expanding the scope of the Community Response Education Program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2021, except the provision on the Community Response Education Program takes effect July 1, 2021.

#### **§ 4 — STATEWIDE SENIOR CENTER WORKGROUP**

##### ***Membership***

The bill establishes a 14-member statewide senior center working group to develop a coordinated plan for senior centers and municipal services for older adults. The group's members must include:

1. the aging and disability services and social services commissioners, or their designees;
2. the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity;
3. two representatives of the Connecticut Association of Senior Center Personnel, appointed by the Senate majority leader, who may be legislators;
4. one representative of the Connecticut Association of Municipal Agents for the Elderly, appointed by the governor;
5. one representative of the Connecticut Local Administrators of Social Services, appointed by the House minority leader and who may be a legislator;
6. five representatives of senior centers, with one each from the state's five elderly planning and services areas, two each appointed by the House Speaker and Senate President, and one appointed by the House majority leader, who may be legislators;

7. one representative of a nonprofit senior center, appointed by the governor; and
8. one representative from a National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC)-accredited senior center, appointed by the Senate minority leader, who may be a legislator.

Appointing authorities must make initial appointments by October 31, 2021, and fill any vacancies. The commission's executive director serves as the working group's chairperson and must hold the first meeting by November 30, 2021.

The commission's administrative staff serve as the working group's administrative staff.

***Duties***

The bill requires the working group to:

1. develop an annual plan to support and develop senior centers and municipal services for older adults, including identifying training needs and coordinating existing resources;
2. evaluate the feasibility of implementing standards for delivering core services and make recommendations for these standards, including those allowing for parity of core services across municipalities while maintaining service delivery flexibility;
3. consult with the five area agencies on aging and other agencies;
4. facilitate coordination and communication among senior centers and municipal services for older adults with executive branch departments, including the departments of aging and disability services, housing, mental health and addiction services, public health, social services, and transportation, as well as with community agencies and initiatives impacting older adults;
5. develop and provide access to best practices and procedures for senior centers and municipal services for older adults; and

6. recommend any necessary appropriations or legislative changes to the legislature's Aging, Housing, Human Services, Planning and Development, Public Health, and Transportation committees.

### **Report**

By January 1, 2023, the working group must report its findings and recommendations to the Aging, Housing, Human Services, Planning and Development, Public Health, and Transportation committees. The working group terminates when it submits the report or January 1, 2023, whichever is later.

### **§ 3 — COMMISSION ASSISTANCE TO SENIOR CENTERS**

The bill requires the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, within available appropriations, to provide assistance to senior centers and assign or appoint necessary personnel to do so. Assistance may include:

1. establishing and maintaining a list of senior centers and municipal services for older adults, as well as a list of resources for their staff;
2. developing technical assistance for the staff, directly or by referral to experts;
3. communicating regularly with the staff about local, state, and federal support and services that interest them; and
4. facilitating the statewide senior center working group, as described above.

### **§ 2 — MULTIPURPOSE SENIOR CENTERS**

Under the bill, a multi-purpose senior center may provide the following services:

1. nutrition services,
2. health and wellness programs,

3. employment assistance,
4. intergenerational initiatives,
5. community service and civic engagement opportunities,
6. public benefits counseling,
7. socialization and educational opportunities,
8. transportation,
9. peer counseling,
10. financial and retirement counseling,
11. arts and recreation programs, and
12. case management services.

#### **§ 5 — COMMUNITY RESPONSE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The bill expands the allowable scope of the state's Community Response Education Program to include resources for:

1. police departments and municipal officials to provide programs on senior citizen sexual assault and abuse safety, prevention, and risk reduction and
2. educating seniors, in addition to families and children as under current law, on preventing and avoiding sexual abuse and assault.

Under existing law, the Court Support Services Division (in conjunction with experts in related fields) administers the program, within available appropriations, to help neighborhoods, parents, and children learn how to better protect themselves from sexual assault and sexual abuse. The bill specifies that neighborhoods include senior centers or other facilities serving or housing seniors.

#### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Aging Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 15 Nay 0 (02/16/2021)