

Public Safety and Security Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5586

AN ACT REQUIRING EXPANSION OF THE CRISIS INITIATIVE PILOT

Title: PROGRAM THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

Vote Date: 3/24/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/11/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

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Rep. Robin Green, 55th Dist.

Rep. Devin R. Carney, 23rd Dist.

Rep. Charles J. Ferraro, 117th Dist.

Rep. John-Michael Parker, 101st Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill will allow the CT State Police no later than January 1, 2022, to expand the CRISIS Initiative, Connection to Recovery through Intervention to the entire state. This pilot program has been successful in providing help to those suffering with mental health/substance abuse in the area of Troop E, Connecticut State Police. At a minimum, this bill will require training for police officers, coordination between the following providers, police officers, mental health professionals and when referring to facilities for mental health services. The opiate crisis remains in Connecticut and this bill provide access for police along with others to help those suffering mental health and substance abuse issues.

This bill would allow a police officer who has reasonable cause to believe a person suffering from an apparent overdose or a person suffering from a psychiatric disability be taken into custody for immediate care and treatment.

This bill is very similar to HB5450 which did not get voted on due to session ending because of the COVID-19 shutdown.

Substitute language

The word "protective" will be added before the word custody.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) has partnered with the Connecticut State Police on The CRISIS initiative: Connection to Recovery through Intervention, Support, and Initiating Services. Through the CRISIS initiative Southeastern Mental Health Authority (SMHA) teamed with the CT State Police, Troop E using grant dollar to pilot a program bringing together the CT State Police and DMHAS CIT program. This pilot program was part of a larger grant the CT State Police received to combat the on-going opiate crisis. The program placed special emphasis on reaching out to and following up with people who use opiates and/or have been affected by this epidemic. The program allowed CT State Troopers to receive CIT training on best practices for responding to calls involving people with mental illness and/or substance abuse. The training has resulted in fewer injuries to officers and the people in crisis, reduced use of force, fewer involuntary commitments, and a reduction in officer's time off patrol. While the grant funding has expired, DMHAS has continued the work of the pilot by assigning a SMHA social worker to work alongside CT State Troopers, providing clinical support including de-escalating crises involving people with mental illness and/or substance abuse, supporting families affected by mental illness and/or substance abuse, and providing follow ups to ensure people with mental illness and/or substance abuse have access to needed services. DMHAS supports the intent of HB 5586 as evidenced by the services described above. While these services benefit the behavioral health community, funding for the expansion these services are not currently available.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

House Republican Office (HRO), State of CT

The HRO supports this bill. The HRO believes that the CRISIS Initiative training, which is being extended in this bill, provides state and local police officers advanced situation de-escalation tactics for calls related to mental health, overdose, and substance abuse related incidents.

It is the belief of HRO that the training provided by the CRISIS Initiative creates a safer environment both for our police officers, as well as for the individuals they are helping. This proposal would expand the CRISIS Pilot program, currently in Troop E, to the entire state. The Connection to Recovery Through Intervention, Support & Initiating Services programs (CRISIS program) was originally launched in 2017 by New London County's State Police Troop E with support from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS). Local police departments have access to this program as well, which also includes

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) certification to our state troopers. There is also a DHMAS clinician currently assigned to Troop E who responds to these calls when they are on duty.

Oftentimes, calls that deal with opioid and substance abuse result in an intervention by mental health professionals instead of an arrest. When officers are responding to calls, on patrol, or are conducting community-oriented policing and someone reaches out for help, they can take down information and generate a referral to a CRISIS mental health professional. This makes it easier for police to do their jobs and get people into the mental health pipeline as well as being able to identify the most afflicted. This is a proactive step that, if taken, could save lives. The clinician completes related paperwork with the hospital making the process easier for the hospital staff to respond quickly. Furthermore, the clinician puts together a long-term treatment plan for the individual and follows proper follow-up procedures with family and clients. From May 2017 through December of 2020, 588 people have been referred to a clinician through CRISIS, and 483 follow ups were conducted. The eastern portion of the state has been disproportionately hit hard by the opioid crisis. However, the crisis is not confined to just this region of the state. The CRISIS initiative has not only been very effective in addressing this mental health epidemic but has also brought together state and local law enforcement, mental health professionals, and the broader community. We would like to see the success of the CRISIS program expanded state-wide, but to do so will require additional financial resources. However, we believe that this is an effective policy change that will address the most critical public safety issues that the country, and our state, faces today. We thank the committee for raising HB 5586: An Act Expanding the CRISIS Initiative Program Throughout the State. We look forward to answering any questions you may have

Miranda Mahoney, Coordinator, Griswold PRIDE

Griswold PRIDE supports this bill. This organization believes the CRISIS Initiative which this bill is an effective and significant program that provides a needed resource for troopers in dealing with mental illness and substance use emergency calls. It is the belief of Griswold PRIDE that the CRISIS Initiative reduces the number of law enforcement calls for service and recurring emergency room visits. Griswold PRIDE strongly stresses a sense of urgency as they state that that the isolation and a disruption to treatment services, having been caused by the pandemic, has resulted in drastic increases in mental health crises and substance use calls as well as overdose deaths.

Lisa B. Winjum, JD, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut

NAMI Connecticut supports this bill. This organization believes every community should have a robust crisis intervention team. CIT training should be available to every law enforcement officer. NAMI supports mental health training for our first responders.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Bonnie Gray, Asst. Clerk

Date: 3/31/2021