Public Health Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6489

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING REMOTE ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS MAINTAINED BY HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.

Vote Date: 3/12/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/3/2021

File No.: 228

Disclaimer: The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.

SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires hospitals to provide the Department of Public Health (DPH) access, including remote access if technically feasible, to complete electronic medical records on reportable diseases and emergency illnesses and health conditions. It also requires hospitals to grant DPH access to complete patient medical records related to the Connecticut Tumor Registry and Maternal Mortality Review Program, if deemed necessary.

Finally, this legislation requires DPH, no earlier than July 1, 2021, to establish a one-year pilot program to test the impact of providing the department remote access to complete hospital electronic medical records related to birth defects, births, fetal deaths, and death occurrences.

In addition, the Connecticut Hospital Association will identify one hospital to participate in the pilot program, and that hospital must share complete electronic medical records the department deems necessary to perform quality improvement audits.

The bill requires DPH, no earlier than July 1, 2022, to evaluate the pilot program and determine whether it will be fully implemented. If so, hospitals must start providing DPH access to these records on a continual basis.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut Department of Public Health offers support of this bill. The passage of this legislation would allow the Department remote access to specific types of medical records

and the authority to develop a pilot program that would determine the impact of providing remote access to certain electronic medical records maintained by a hospital. As stated in the testimony, "[t]o protect public health, the Department conducts surveillance for reportable diseases and emergency syndromes… Medical records of patients are reviewed to collect data related to patient demographics, disease severity, risk factors for disease, and reportable diseases or conditions.

Accurate and complete data is essential to inform prevention measures. Historically, conducting medical record reviews has been a time-consuming effort for agency staff, in part due to the travel time required to visit all hospitals statewide." Additionally, having remote access allows the DPH staff to navigate patients' records and see medical history. Eliminating multiple in-person trips for patients would equate to a gain "of ten hours or more per month of productive work time, in addition to averted costs for mileage reimbursements." Overall, this legislation would assist the Department by "increasing efficiency, improving cost-effectiveness of staff time and processes and facilitating more timely follow-up on reportable diseases and conditions which can lead to better prevention activities and healthier Connecticut residents."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Stamford Public Health:
Stamford Public Health, an independent non-profit health care system, offers support for the passage of this bill. As stated in the testimony, "Stamford Health supports DPH having access to information it needs to fulfill its responsibilities and it is appreciative of reducing hospital administrative burdens while ensuring security standards concerning protected health information, which are continuously evolving, are maintained."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None

Reported by: Kassandra Fruin　　　　　　　**Date: 3/29/2021**