

Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-3

AN ACT CONCERNING DIVERSE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, WORKER
Title: PROTECTIONS AND SMALL BUSINESS REVITALIZATION.

Vote Date: 3/22/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/18/2021

File No.: 352

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

COMMERCE COMMITTEE

REASONS FOR BILL:

SB 3 aims to counter these obstacles brought on by COVID-19 and other economic factors by stimulating the economy. This will be done by buttressing diverse economic opportunities, worker protections and small business revitalization.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

David Lehman, Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community

Development: acknowledges the importance of the many issues that SB – 3 covers but notes that DECD would not be able to deliver the duties of this bill unless provided additional resources. DECD also makes a few suggestions for the language of the bill. For example, in Section 2, DECD recommends legislators to support Governor Lamont’s workforce initiatives instead as it is very similar to Section 23 of SB – 881: An Act Concerning Workforce Development. Also, DECD notes that Section 3 is similar to Section 6 of HB – 6440: An Act Concerning the JobsCT Tax Rebate Program. Regarding Section 4, DECD recommends that the lodging industry stakeholders, in addition to tourism and restaurants, be included as part of the industries studied by the task force. The members of this task force should also include representatives from these industries. Regarding Section 5, DECD suggests that any plan to market certificate or job training programs should be done in conjunction with the credential registry system in the Office of Higher Education. Regarding Section 7, DECD notes that the Office of Workforce Strategy is already meeting with the Department of Veterans Affairs to discuss opportunities to collaborate on workforce development. Lastly, DECD states that the micro loan program described in Section 11 is best suited with their partner the Connecticut Small Business Development Center.

Kurt Westby, Commissioner of the Department of Labor (CTDOL), addresses a few concerns that his department has with SB – 1. He states that the definition of “human investment capital” in Section 1 alludes to the Individual Development Account (IDA) Reserve fund and notes that CTDOL no longer operates a state sponsored IDA program and has control over IDA funds. Also, he mentions that the definition of “dislocated worker” in Section 3 needs to be updated in order to be consistent with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Lastly, he notes that there are several sections in SB – 1 where CTDOL should be included in such as Sections 4, 7, and 12. For section 4, CTDOL requests that the Labor Commissioner serves on the task force to study the impact of the pandemic on certain industries. For Section 7, CTDOL already provides employment services to veterans via their American Job Centers and therefore, DECD does not need to create a plan. Lastly, Section 12 requires DECD to conduct a study to analyze the effectiveness of the Federal Bonding Program. CTDOL notes that they currently administer fidelity bonds and would like to consult with DECD on this study.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT), believes SB -3 should be more inclusive for people living with criminal records or are incarcerated. According to Moore, these individuals are entitled to the opportunity to access employment and dignity in the workplace. She notes that Section 3 creates a priority system within DECD to provide economic development financial assistance to applicants who make jobs available to individuals with backgrounds including unemployment, low-income, dislocated workers, people of color, people with disabilities, and more. Regarding the bill language, ACLU-CT believes that Section 3 should be expanded to people with criminal records. ACLU-CT also supports the efforts in Section 6 but recommends these programs be directed at improving employment opportunities for individuals with criminal records. Lastly, ACLU-CT suggests that Section 9 should make sure the recommendations of the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development be aimed at improving wages, conditions, and humanity for imprisoned workers.

Kellie Vallieres, Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) and Vice Chair of the Governor’s Workforce Council, supports the intent of the bill but notes that SB - 3 requires resources that are not included in the Governor’s Recommended Budget. OWS also makes a few recommended amendments for Sections 1,2, 5, 7, and 9 of the bill’s language.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

Reported By	Date
Jade Hardrick, Intern	4/6/21