

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-102

AN ACT CONCERNING THE CERTIFICATION OF MENTAL HEALTH FIRST

Title: AID TRAINING PROGRAMS.

Vote Date: 3/26/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/8/2021

File No.: 418

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill allows additional vendors to provide the required mental health first aid training (MHFA) necessary for paramedic licensure candidates. The training must share substantially similar certifying requirements as the current training along with the approval of the Department of Public Health (DPH).

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Greg Allard, President, Association of Connecticut Ambulance Providers (ACAP):

Mr. Allard and ACAP support this bill to expand the allowable mental health first aid (MHFA) training programs as required by the Department of Public Health (DPH) for successful paramedic licensure. Current statute only allows for one program from one vendor and the training provided is costly, inflexible, and does not meet the diverse learning styles of paramedic licensure candidates. The ACAP does request an amendment to allow for a "subject matter expert" to provide the training even if they are not registered with a MHFA training program approved by the DPH.

Derrick Caranci, President, Connecticut Association of Paramedics and EMTs (CAPE):

Mr. Caranci and CAPE support this bill because current law only allows for one vendor to provide MHFA training and the law is not clear on the specific training needed to meet the

DPH's paramedic and EMT licensure requirements. Students are limited to one nationally based vendor, classes are typically not in easily accessible locations and can be cost prohibitive for many applicants. Additionally, the DPH does not have oversight or control of the curriculum provided by the one allowable vendor, nor are they able to vet any of the instructors. CAPE would like an amendment to remove language referring to any specific vendor and would like DPH to be entrusted with the authority to approve any MHFA program of study that addresses the current licensure requirements.

Valerie English Cooper:

Ms. English Cooper supports this legislation and requests for an amendment requiring the use of evidence-based mental health training. While she supports the addition of more vendors to provide MHFA training, she is concerned that the current bill language will allow for a fast and loose interpretation of MHFA training that is not evidence-based. This does not support the original intent of the current legislation which is to support both patients and providers with MHFA to address the impact of trauma. Ms. English Cooper lists several requirements necessary for a successful and comprehensive MHFA training program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Ben Shaiken, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance):

Mr. Shaiken and The Alliance do not support this bill as the current language would diminish the requirements for MHFA training programs as it allows for uncertified and unapproved programs to become MHFA training providers in the state. Mr. Shaiken lists many community resources that provide MHFA training to nonprofit organizations across the state and they all use programs utilizing peer reviewed, evidence-based research and methodologies. The Alliance would like the DPH to have the final authority on which MHFA training programs are allowable to meet licensure requirements.

Reported by: Kate Hamilton

Date: April 13, 2021