

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-122

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A UNIT WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE
TO INVESTIGATE HATE CRIMES AND CRIMINAL ACTS COMMITTED BY

Title: EXTREMIST GROUPS.

Vote Date: 3/18/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/9/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

Co-sponsor: Sen.Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Given the recent rise in hate crimes and extremist groups, this bill will create a Hate Crimes Unit within the Connecticut State Police. This unit will monitor, record and classify all crimes committed in our state which are motivated by bigotry or bias. The unit will annually after 10/1/2021, publish a report on the department's website.

Substitute language

In Section 1, added new sentence in section 1(d) re the head of the unit and serving as a liaison to the State-Wide Hate Crimes Advisory Council

In Section 2, defined "extremist" and "extremist group"

In Section 3, requires law enforcement unit to submit a report within 14 days and added new subsection (c)Not later than January 1, 2022, re standardized form, best practices to share information, and informing the public of their right to report any alleged crime or suspected criminal activity

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Office of the Commissioner, Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection, State of Connecticut

The Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection is in support of the bill. There have been ongoing discussions regarding this bill and the Commissioner is committed to working out agreed upon language to achieve the goal of this bill.

Division of Criminal Justice, State of Connecticut

The Division supports this bill. The Division supports any and all enhanced efforts to investigate and prosecute hate crimes and criminal acts by extremist groups. Given the proper resources this Unit will strengthen law enforcement's capacity to conduct more in-depth examinations using the latest technological investigative resources needed in the age of internet.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Saud Anwar, Senator, State of Connecticut

Sen. Anwar is in support of this bill with changes. The intent of this bill is to protect our residents of our state by creating a centralized Hate Crimes Unit under the State Police. The amendments that I suggest would enhance the function of this legislation. Sen. Anwar would like the committee to support this bill with the amendments submitted in his written testimony.

Esha Bhattacharya, Undergraduate Student at Yale University, Yale Dems

Esha Bhattacharya is in support of this bill. The pandemic has exacerbated the division that already exists between racial, ethnic, religious and gender groups. One of the most significant duties of government at all levels is to protect its citizens. This bill is extremely beneficial to pass for all citizens of CT, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

The following students from Yale University submitted testimony in support:

Sydney Bryant, William Garcia, Josh Guo, Theo Haaks, Aparajita Kaphle, Isabella Marin, Kyle Mayer, Isabella Morales Undergraduate Students at Yale University, Yale Dems

Michael Bloom, Executive Director, Jewish Federation Association of CT, JFACT

Mr. Bloom is in support of this bill. There is a documented rise in hate crimes in our country over the last several years. This rise of hate puts many in the Jewish community on edge. Our Jewish institutions are under constant threat. Any additional resources to combat this is welcome.

Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) State of Connecticut

CHRO is in support of this bill. SB122 would create a Hate Crimes and Extremist Group Investigative Unit that is required to publish data on the number of hate crimes in our state. This would raise public awareness of the issue and craft targeted strategies to eliminate violence against members of our communities based on their protected class status.

Maebel Ailis Haynes, Student EO Smith High School

Ms. Haynes supports this bill. Our current society and looking forward, it is important to have a task force/team dedicated for preventing and investigating hate crimes and extremist groups.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Kelly McConney Moore, interim senior policy counsel, ACLU

ACLU-CT is in opposition to this bill. The ACLU-CT recognizes that if we are to transform the harm policing has inflicted on communities of color across the country, we must begin by reallocating funds spent on policing into programs, services and resources that will make our communities healthier and safer. CT must work to limit the roles and presence of police in marginalized communities. We also recognize white supremacist violence has been on the rise in the country and in CT, the government has done far too little to combat it. Many communities are aggressively overpoliced and under protected when they are victims of crime. We must meet people where they are now, but that does not require us to expand our policing to do so.

Reported by: Bonnie Gray, Asst. Clerk

Date: 3/30/2021