

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-702

AN ACT CONCERNING A PROGRAM TO PROVIDE FREE SWIMMING
Title: LESSONS TO INDIVIDUALS UNDER THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN.

Vote Date: 2/25/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/4/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would allow DEEP to work with non-profits to develop free swimming lessons for children under the age of 18. It also allows for DEEP to accept donation from the nonprofits to offset these costs.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner Katie S. Dykes, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection: She supports this bill only if there are changes made to how it is written. She sees that beginner lessons should not take place in natural bodies of water found at state parks but rather in more controlled environments, in addition the DEEP does not have enough staffing resources, experience, or infrastructure in place to create, support and sustain such a program. She also does not see how any gifts, donations or grants can support such a program in a sustainable way.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Cristina Teusher, Founder of Sweet Blue Swim Academy: She supports this bill. She encourages the Committee on Children to consider amending this bill a step further “to deem swim lessons as an essential service during this pandemic and any future pandemics we may encounter.” She proceeds to bring an assortment of data in regard to child drowning rates and how important it is to not cease teaching children how to swim.

Valerie Stolfi Collins, Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association Executive Director: She is in favor of this bill. CRPA agrees with the necessity of offering swimming classes to children though it recommends the following additional language to be included: “the addition of the words “municipality or” in line 8 of the bill prior to the word “nonprofit” as many municipal park and recreation departments are experienced in offering these services and may be interested in partnering with the state to provide these services at state facilities or at their own facilities. Language in the bill should not limit the State’s ability to partner with municipalities to provide such services.”

John L. Cattelan, Executive Director of Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs: He supports this bill. He mentions that in 2008 the Water Safety Week was established at the end of June. Free swim lessons were provided across the state, the lessons were funded by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, along with the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Public Health. John Cattelan also brings up the disproportionate amount of children drowning according to their ethnicity as well as socioeconomic background, saying that “[t]his is unacceptable but it is also preventable.” In addition, YMCAs provide over 40,000 children and adults with swimming lessons every year via classes and their attendance at a Y summer camp.

Kevin Borrup, DrPH, JD, MPA, Executive Director of the Injury Prevention Center at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center: He supports this bill. He mentions some background in regard to the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center and how this bill is relevant for someone who works on his field. Further, he brings some statistics saying that “In one multi-state study that looked to the effectiveness of swim lessons, swim lessons were found to reduce the risk of drowning in 1 to 4 year olds by as much as 88%.” Therefore, the Injury Prevention Center at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center strongly supports this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No Opposition to this bill offered

Reported by: Gabriela Dos Santos

Date: March 6th 2021