

Appropriations Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-705

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF PANDEMIC AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Title: PREPAREDNESS.

Vote Date: 4/21/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/26/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Appropriations Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The intention of the bill is to establish an Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness in order to take proactive steps to ready the state for future public health emergencies.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Department of Public Health, Acting Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford](#) opposed creating a separate Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness. She stated that the Department of Public Health would rather take steps to reform the current system than create a different one. She cited the March 2020 activation of the State Response framework which enables the state to respond to emergencies. Under the State Response Framework, the Department of Public Health is a lead agency for epidemiology and public health subject matter. She cited the department's ability to mitigate the pandemic with this framework by implementing statewide policies and procedures.

The already existing DPH Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response prepares the state against public health emergencies. Acting Commissioner Gifford cited that the office developed and implemented the state's public health emergency plan throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and can continue to do so for future public health related emergencies. Additionally, she cited the large-scale investment the state would have to make in order for this bill to be feasible.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Jeff Leake, President- CT Education Association](#) cited food insecurity and sharing teaching staff as two issues that should be addressed in looking to prepare for future emergencies as he stated these were two major challenges of the pandemic as it relates to education.

[Sal Luciano, President-CT AFL-CIO](#) stated that a more collaborative approach to future emergencies require cooperation from both the legislative and executive branches. He highlighted the importance of Section 5 of the bill which recognizes the need to provide assistance to essential workers.

[George Mathanool, Commissioner- Groton Economic Development Commission](#) emphasized the importance of Connecticut utilizing the strength and possibilities of its supply chain to better prepare for future emergencies.

[Mag Morelli, President- Leading Age](#) emphasized the importance of planning for future emergencies rather than focusing on characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, she supports the allocation of additional resources to the Department of Public Health to assist them.

[Ashley Zane, Government Affairs Associate- CBIA](#) stated CBIA's support of Section 1, which would help the business community by connecting small businesses to PPE providers. She highlights this bill's ability to create predictability and sustainability within the business community in uncertain times.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed

Reported by: Allie Kazlauskas

Date: April 26, 2021