

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-883

AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR'S

Title: COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS.

Vote Date: 3/31/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/19/2021

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would allow candidates who participate in the Citizens Election Program to use a portion of their grant to pay for childcare expenses that are related to their campaign. It would also make the process of finding and applying for vacant positions easier for all residents, while also encouraging appointing authorities to pursue diverse candidates. This bill would remove barriers that prevent access to running for elected office and encourage more participation of women in state government.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Denise W. Merrill, Secretary of the State: The Secretary of the State testified that the government works best when it reflects all of us. They explain that according to the most recent report prepared by their office, on the reporting boards and commissions, men make up 57% of membership, even though they only make up 49% of the population. Women are underrepresented making up 43% of the memberships despite being 51% of Connecticut's population. They explain that the only racial group that is overrepresented on the membership of CT's boards and commissions is white, non-Hispanic members who make up 78% of the membership but only 67% of the state's population while every other racial group is underrepresented.

Shawn T. Wooden, Treasurer, State of Connecticut: Wooden explains in their testimony that women take on a larger share of childcare responsibilities which creates a barrier to participation in the democratic process. They state that this bill would ensure that childcare would no longer be a barrier that would prevent someone in participating in state government.

They also explain that women and people of color are underrepresented in state government and by increasing diversity would warrant a variety of voices and viewpoint to be heard.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, State of Connecticut: The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities testified that this bill would open the opportunity to participate in state government for people that would otherwise be unable to due to having young children. They state that this bill would increase diversity of experience that people can bring to their governing. The CHRO also explains that the bill requiring good faith efforts to include members of various communities will ensure that viewpoints of all Connecticut residents are heard.

Melissa McCaw, Secretary, Office of Policy and Management, State of Connecticut: The Office of Policy and Management testified that allowing candidates to use election funds to cover childcare costs is a crucial step in removing barriers and ensuring there is equal participation in state politics. They also explained that this bill is important to ensure there is diverse representation from all communities.

Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut: Bysiewicz stated that this bill will help enable equitable gender and racial representation in state government. They explain that allowing candidates to use election funds to cover childcare costs will open the door for many parents to run for office as well as help bridge the gap of gender inequality in state government.

Michael J. Brandi, Executive Director and General Counsel, State Elections Enforcement Commission, State of Connecticut: The State Elections Enforcement Commission testified that the bill provides a definition for childcare and guidelines for the amount of funds that can be spent on it.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Andrea Barton Reeves, CEO, CT Paid Leave Authority: Reeves explains that this bill is overdue and will help facilitate access for women to run for elected office. It would, in turn, promote equity on state boards and commissions. They explain that an absence of diverse voices negatively affects the state as a whole. They explain that the bill would also increase transparency in representation on state boards and commission. By expressing the makeup of state boards and commissions, it would prompt those with appointing authority to be more equitable when making their selections. Reeves states that an increase in diversity would promote inclusion, making our state stronger.

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut: Moore testified that in the 2019-2022 General Assembly, only 33.5% of Connecticut state senators and representatives were women, despite 51% of the Connecticut population being made up of women. As of 2020, they state, BIPOC made up only 18% of the General Assembly, despite 34% of the Connecticut population being made up of BIPOC. They testify that these inequalities are a representation of the barriers that prevent women, and people of color from participating in state government. Moore explains that allowing campaign funds to be used for childcare can begin to eliminate these barriers.

Tom Swan, Executive Director, Connecticut Citizen Action Group: Swan stated that they agreed that childcare is a valid campaign expense and should be considered a proper use of CEP funds. They also support the additional recommendations from the Governor's Council.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Jenna Schwerdtle

Date: 03/31/2021