

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1074

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS PROVISIONS RELATED TO GOVERNMENT

Title: ADMINISTRATION AND COVID-19.

Vote Date: 3/31/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/26/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would extend the duration of various provisions of executive orders concerning FOI requirements for meetings and appeals, regulatory requirements, municipal nominations and notaries. It would allow public agencies to hold meetings remotely using a conference call, videoconference or other technology in addition to meeting in person.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Freedom of Information Commission: The FOI commission believes that these bills would make public agencies more accessible and transparent. They explained that the "attendance" during remote meetings for some public agencies has been higher than in the past years and encouraged more citizen participation in the governmental process. They stated that this bill would also be a step toward increased transparency and access for the public by requiring recordings and transcripts to be made available to the public.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut: Moore believes that one of the most vital ways that people can ensure that their voices are heard within their government is to observe, participate in, testify at, and attend the meetings of local government. They state that having state agencies give both online notices, and newspaper notices of meetings would likely reach the largest number of residents. They testified that it is critical to extend open government requirements to virtual

meetings and having it clearly explained in a bill would ensure there is a seamless access to records of government action.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns: Gara believes that allowing virtual holdings of meetings has been critical in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19. They testified that due to the uncertainty of the pandemic municipalities need to be able to continue to use electronic technology to hold meetings and hearings.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Jenna Schwerdtle

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