

Human Services Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

10:00 AM in Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 by Chairman, Sen. Moore M. S22.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Berthel E. S32; Cabrera J. S17; Lesser M. S09; Moore M. S22

Representatives: Abercrombie C. 083; Arora H. 151; Buckbee B. 067; Butler L. 072; Case J. 063; Cook M. 065; Dathan L. 142; Garibay J. 060; Goupil C. 035; Hughes A. 135; Mastrofrancesco G. 080; Santiago H. 084; Simmons C. 144; Stallworth C. 126; Wood T. 141

Absent were:

Senators:

Representatives:

1. SB 764 (Raised) An Act Concerning Medicaid Providers (JF to Floor)

Motion by Rep. Santiago, Second by Rep. Dathan

Rep. Case commented that he will be flagging with a no until Appropriations identifies the cost.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco expressed concern over the fiscal note and mentioned previous discussions over payment parity between physicians and other providers, indicating she will be flagging this as a no.

Rep. Dathan noted that the committee is voting on a policy and it will then go to Appropriations for the fiscal impact. Rep. Dathan also noted the cost savings identified in testimony.

Rep. Case stated that the bill, if passed, will go to the floor before going to Appropriations.

Rep. Wood echoed Rep. Mastrofrancesco and voiced concerns over the provider parity issue. Rep. Wood asked if pay levels would be addressed in Appropriations.

Rep. Abercrombie indicated some professions will get a rate increase and midwives would be paid similarly to physicians. Rep. Abercrombie stated she believes it is good policy.

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 14 voting yea and 5 voting nay.

2. HB 6318 (Raised) An Act Concerning Service Animals (JFS to the Floor)

Motion by Rep. Case, Second by Sen. Lesser

Rep. Buckbee asked for clarity about what animals were covered within the bill.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that the bill language complies with federal law where the definition is clear.

Rep. Buckbee asked how a service animal is defined and differentiated from support animals.

Rep. Abercrombie noted that the bill does not cover support animals, only service animals.

Rep. Buckbee indicated he would support the bill as such.

Rep. Abercrombie noted that the JFS language defines 'disabilities' with more clarity.

Rep. Case asked to move this bill to a consent calendar.

A motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Dathan to create a consent calendar and place this bill on it.

3. SB 909 (Raised) An Act Concerning Changes to the Husky B Program (JF to the Floor)

Motion by Rep. Hughes, Second by Rep. Santiago

Rep. Case asked that the bill be placed on the Consent Calendar

4. SB 910 (Raised) An Act Expanding Medicaid Coverage for Post-Partum Care to Twelve Months After a Medicaid Beneficiary Gives Birth to a Child (JFS to the Floor)

Motion by Rep. Dathan, Second by Sen. Lesser

Rep. Case indicated he would be a no vote and would like to see the fiscal note first.

Rep. Abercrombie announced that the federal government had expanded the option under Medicaid from two months to twelve months with a 5-year extension of eligibility.

This bill will codify Connecticut's compliance with federal law.

Rep. Case asked if the bill would impact Connecticut's budget.

Rep. Abercrombie indicated there was a potential increase in the federal match and may include an additional enhanced match. Details were forthcoming.

Rep. Case noted this was not a definitive answer to his question and he would still vote no.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco stated she had two concerns; one is the fiscal note and the second was if the bill would cover undocumented immigrants.

Rep. Abercrombie indicated that undocumented immigrants are not covered in the bill.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco stated she would still be voting no.

Rep. Wood asked why this bill was going to the floor before going to Appropriations.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that tight timelines had dictated a need for a more efficient process.

Rep. Wood asked if there would be a floor vote or if the bill would be brought up on the floor and immediately sent to Appropriations.

Rep. Abercrombie clarified that it would be sent to the floor as a placeholder and then moved to Appropriations.

Rep. Wood indicated she would support the bill as policy but still has reservations about the process.

Rep. Arora echoed Rep. Wood's concerns. He noted that the bill represents good policy, but the process doesn't allow for getting a fiscal note prior to a vote. He doesn't want to pass a bill they can't pay for and will be voting no.

Rep. Buckbee supports the concept but has similar reservations as his colleagues, noting that he will be voting no.

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 14 voting yea and 5 voting nay.

5. SB 911 (Raised) An Act Requiring the State to Provide Medical Assistance for Prenatal Care (JF to the Floor)

Motion by Sen. Lesser, Second by Rep. Hughes

Rep. Case expressed concern over the process and lack of a fiscal note, and he will flag this with a no.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco has concerns with the lack of a fiscal note and asked if this bill will cover undocumented immigrants.

Sen. Moore indicated that the bill does cover them.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked if the bill were to pass, would SB 910 then cover undocumented immigrants.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that it would.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco indicated she will be voting no.

Sen. Lesser stated that the intent is to provide coverage for children based on an Oklahoma statute.

Rep. Wood noted that mothers are currently covered for prenatal care.

Sen. Lesser stated that the bill is specific to several scenarios in which a mother cannot currently receive prenatal care. He also noted that the care is for the baby.

Rep. Wood noted that she believed there was unclear language in the bill. She expressed concern over the language, as she thought it was deceptive, not clear and straightforward.

Sen. Moore asked if Rep. Wood wanted to amend the language to improve the clarity of the bill.

Rep. Wood stated that language should be included that clearly states coverage of undocumented immigrants.

Sen. Moore noted that many groups testified in support of the bill at the public hearing, and no one testified in opposition.

Rep. Wood re-stated that the language should reflect undocumented immigrants are covered in this bill.

Rep. Abercrombie detailed several scenarios where coverage would be provided to mothers.

Sen. Lesser contributed to describing these scenarios and mentioned the time limit to eligibility.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked if the health care coverage was for the mother.

Sen. Lesser noted that the beneficiary of the care is the child.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco commented that she believes the bill provides prenatal care for the mother, and the bill should state that.

Rep. Hughes noted that eligibility is streamlined if the mother is carrying a child.

Rep. Butler asked when mothers are eligible for coverage in this bill and if it only covers prenatal care.

Sen. Lesser stated that only prenatal coverage will be provided up to delivery.

Rep. Cook noted that comprehensive prenatal coverage reduces the risk of low birthweight babies and saves the state money in the long run.

Rep. Wood asked if this bill covers the child's health while in utero, then does the child have legal standing.

Marie Grady, LCO, stated that coverage is governed by federal law and these laws do not cover undocumented immigrants.

Rep. Wood stated that CT is financially distressed, and, in a difficult pandemic year, the legislature needs to be aware of the financial impact of bills passed.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that the bill would provide prenatal care for women who otherwise are not eligible for Medicaid.

Rep. Case asked if the mother would have post-partum Medicaid coverage under SB 910 if it was passed.

Sen. Lesser responded no.

Marie Grady indicated undocumented immigrants would not be eligible for Medicaid post-partum care.

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 13 voting yea and 6 voting nay.

6. SB 913 (Raised) An Act Requiring Fairness for Families in Medicaid Eligibility and Reimbursement Determinations (JFS to the Floor)

Motion by Rep. Hughes, Second by Rep. Dathan

Rep. Case asked that the bill be moved to the Consent Calendar.

7. HB 6469 (Raised) An Act Concerning the Connecticut Home-Care Program for the Elderly (JF to the Floor)

Motion by Rep. Butler, Second by Rep. Cook

Rep. Case stated that he needs to see the fiscal note and will flag this with a no.

Rep. Abercrombie noted that this is a state funded Home Care Program, which over the last 6 years has experienced large lapses. Many seniors cannot afford the copay and drop out of the program. The intent of the bill is to use the historical lapses to pay for the copays.

Sen. Berthel agreed that the bill has merit but he remains concerned and will flag the bill until Appropriations weighs in. He will support the bill if it's budget neutral.

Rep. Case asked what would happen if there isn't a lapse next year.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that the future is not a concern at this stage. Historically, there have been lapses that will cover the copay.

Rep. Case stated that he is concerned that the lapse is being seen as a source of funds. He notes that the Governor's budget cut this program.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that the Governor's budget did not cut this program.

Rep. Hughes noted that this program saves the state a lot of money, but seniors are dropping due to the 9% co-pay.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked what the average monthly copay dollar amount is.

Rep. Abercrombie responded that it too difficult to measure due to the variety of services.

Rep. Case expressed frustration with the copay, which he believes must have been implemented to help cover the cost during lean budget years. He asked: what's to prevent a need for the copay in the future? Why not just get rid of the copay? This is why he will flag the bill.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that Human Services programs are flexible. Lapsed funds go into the General Fund and she believes it's time they stayed where they were intended.

Rep. Case noted that DSS testified that the copay remains in the budget and that the lapsed funds will be moved to the General Fund.

Rep. Abercrombie noted that the Governor does not have the lapsed funds until the budget is finished. She explained that the committee has the opportunity to do 'the right thing.'

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 14 voting yea and 5 voting nay.

8. HB 6473 (Raised) An Act Expanding the Diaper Bank to Include Feminine Hygiene Products (JF to the Floor)

Motion by Rep. Hughes; Second by Sen. Lesser

Rep. Case noted that the Diaper Bank is underfunded and adding services to it without additional funding would stress the original intent of the Diaper bank.

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 13 voting yea and 6 voting nay.

The Consent Calendar was presented for a vote:

HB 6318 JFS to the Floor

SB 909 JF to the Floor

SB 913 JFS to the Floor

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 19 voting yea and 0 voting nay.

Sen. Moore announced that the next Committee Meeting will be on March 16, 2021. A Public Hearing will be held on March 11, 2021 at 10:00 AM.

Sen. Moore reminded the committee that votes would remain open until 1:30 PM. The meeting was recessed at 11:45 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Dave Rackliffe
Assistant Clerk

Heather Ferguson-Hull
Committee Clerk