

Human Services Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

9:00 AM in Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 9:08 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:

Sen. Moore made opening remarks.

1. S.B. NO. 955 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING OUTDATED DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES STATUTES. JFS to the Floor

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to JFS to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Dathan and seconded by Rep. Simmons.

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

2. H.B. NO. 6519 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DATA COLLECTION TO PREVENT MALNUTRITION AMONG SENIOR CITIZENS. JFS to the Floor

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to JFS to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Dathan and seconded by Rep. Santiago.

Rep. Case asked if the substitute language creates a study.

Rep. Abercrombie said that the Aging and Disabilities Services Department already collects data. This bill ensures that they evaluate the data to gain insight into the funding streams for programs like Meals on Wheels. Currently, there are three different funding streams, and the goal is to learn more about reimbursements. Rep. Abercrombie noted that the substitute language removes the providers from evaluating data as it is a conflict of interest with the RFP.

Rep. Case asked if this bill is codified in available appropriations within each agency.

Rep. Abercrombie confirmed and added that no appropriation is needed because they already collect this data. This bill simply promotes using the data.

Rep. Wood asked why this issue needs to be codified in statutory language.

Rep. Abercrombie answered that currently, waiver programs are not studying their data to examine different funding streams. She added that this bill is important in figuring out why there are discrepancies within the payment system.

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

3. S.B. NO. 980 (RAISED) AN ACT ELIMINATING INCOME AND ASSET LIMITS FOR THE MED-CONNECT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. JF to the Floor

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to JF to the floor. The motion was made by Sen. Lesser and seconded by Rep. Butler.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked what the current income limit is for this program.

Sen. Lesser answered \$75,000.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked if that number was for an individual or a family.

Sen. Moore answered that it is for an individual.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked for clarification on the requirement for participants to be engaged in a reasonable work effort. She asked if it is an existing or new requirement for the program.

Sen. Lesser answered that this program is specifically designed and intended for individuals in the workforce.

Rep. Abercrombie clarified that the program is designed for people with disabilities. The program requires that participants work.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked why the bill references a substantial work effort, instead of a mandated requirement, if it is indeed a requirement.

Sen. Lesser commented that the program was set up by the federal government over 20 years ago and the work requirement is inherent to the program.

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 17 voting yea and 2 voting nay.

4. S.B. NO. 912 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING AND OVERSIGHT OF FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES. JFS to the Floor

Sen. Moore noted her decision to hold the bill until the following committee meeting to further review the substitute language.

Rep. Case asked if Sen. Moore was referencing the substitute language which removes extra dollars.

Rep. Abercrombie clarified that there is already money in the line item and the bill does not increase the bottom line. She noted that the original bill had an allocation of \$3 million, but the substitute language removes these dollars. This bill does not alter the money allocated in the budget.

Sen. Moore decided to proceed with considering the bill. Sen. Moore asked for a motion to JFS to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Butler and seconded by Rep. Hughes.

Rep. Case re-stated that the substitute language removes the extra \$3 million in this original bill but maintains the dollars in the budget.

Sen. Moore noted that the bill also adds to the membership of the council.

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

5. S.B. NO. 1055 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES. JF to the Floor

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to JF to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Butler and seconded by Rep. Wood.

Rep. Abercrombie explained that this bill makes various technical changes to the Department of Aging and Disability. For example, when the statute was amended to remove the hearing-impaired division, Disability Rights CT became the gatekeeper for complaints, but they did not have enough staff to sustain this. This bill makes technical changes to improve the system.

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

6. H.B. NO. 6634 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ESSENTIAL SUPPORT PERSONS AND A STATE-WIDE VISITATION POLICY FOR RESIDENTS OF LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES. JF to the Floor

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to JF to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Wood and seconded by Rep. Hughes.

Rep. Abercrombie explained that the recommendations in the bill were guided by Connecticut's Long Term Care Ombudsman who has knowledge of federal policies. This bill primarily intends to help residents of long-term care facilities and their families. This bill also aligns with federal law. Rep. Abercrombie commented that the leadership has acknowledged and considered many recommendations heard at the public hearing, but at this time she believes this bill is a strong starting point.

Rep. Arora thanked the committee for taking up this bill in light of the pandemic because visitation is so critically important for so many nursing home residents and families throughout the state.

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

7. H.B. NO. 6636 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING COVID-19 AND ENHANCED FEDERAL MEDICAID FUNDING. JF to the Floor

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to JF to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Wood.

Rep. Abercrombie explained that this bill intends to give legislators a seat at the table when the state decides how to utilize incoming federal dollars concerning Human Services.

Sen. Moore asked the Clerk to call the roll. The motion passed with 17 voting yea and 2 voting nay.

Sen. Moore announced that votes will remain open until 12:30 PM. She also announced that the next committee meeting to JF bills would be Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 9:00 AM.

Sen. Moore recessed the meeting at 10:51 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.

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Gianna Vollano  
Assistant Clerk

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Heather Ferguson-Hull  
Committee Clerk