

Human Services Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, April 1, 2021

9:00 AM in Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 AM by Chairman, Rep. Abercrombie C. 083.

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:

Opening remarks by the Chairs:

The Chairs thanked the members of the Committee, OLR staff, LCO staff, OFA staff, Assistant Clerks and Clerk, Heather Ferguson-Hull, for their participation in a difficult but successful Committee process, made more difficult by the reliance on technology. The process was seamless and much good work was accomplished.

Bills to be JFed:

3. SB 1057 AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOMES. **JF to the Floor**

Rep. Abercrombie asked for a motion to JF to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Cook and seconded by Rep. Dathan. Rep. Abercrombie asked the committee if they had any comments or questions; there were none.

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

4. HB 6635 AN ACT CONCERNING TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE. **JFS to the Floor**

Rep. Abercrombie asked for a motion to JFS to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Dathan. Rep. Abercrombie asked the committee if they had any comments or questions.

Rep. Case noted that there will be costs associated with many of these bills. He suggested that the reason for the large amount of lapsed dollars is due to unused services during the pandemic. Rep. Case noted that he is uncomfortable moving bills forward with large lapses to fund them.

Rep. Abercrombie reminded Rep. Case that Human Services moves bills based on policy decisions, while Appropriations determines the dollars.

Rep. Case acknowledged this concept but re-stated and maintained his original position.

Rep. Abercrombie noted that Medicaid does not fall under the cap. She notes that this bill should not impact the budget.

Rep. Arora stated that Federal money from the Recovery Act is a one-time infusion and he believes the committee should not pass bills with ongoing expenses.

Rep. Abercrombie reiterated that this committee creates policy and does not manage the dollars. The spending in this bill is based on years of lapsed funds.

Rep. Arora noted that policy and cost are inextricably linked. This bill creates a concern of sustainability, which he believes must be considered when determining policy.

Rep. Abercrombie emphasized the need to solely discuss policy in this committee, rather than unsupported claims regarding the budget.

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

5. HB 6637 AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR DEAF, DEAF-BLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS. **JFS to the Floor**

Rep. Abercrombie asked for a motion to JFS to the floor. The motion was made by Sen. Moore and seconded by Rep. Santiago. Rep. Abercrombie asked the committee if they had any comments or questions.

Rep. Buckbee commented on the severe lack of mental health services in Connecticut. He believes this bill is a step in the right direction and is in full support of this bill.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that the substitute language removes the employees for each region in collaboration with agencies. She mentioned that the agencies agreed to be a part of the working group which will begin this summer. Rep. Abercrombie also noted that providers who need funding will hopefully receive it with the influx of dollars coming from the federal government.

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

6. SB 1090 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION TO STUDY A HUSKY FOR ALL SINGLE PAYER, UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM. **JFS to the Floor**

Rep. Abercrombie asked for a motion to JFS to the floor. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Simmons. Rep. Abercrombie asked the committee if they had any comments or questions.

Rep. Case asked if, within the substitute language, the six members of the public would be appointed by the chairpersons of the committees.

Rep. Hughes stated that the answer is yes.

Rep. Case asked if ranking members would be involved in appointing Commission members.

Rep. Hughes indicated this would be at the discretion of the chairs, but no, it is not currently in the bill.

Rep. Arora commented that the minority opinion believes that centralizing, and creating a single-payer health system, is unacceptable. He explained that single-payer systems have failed historically. Rep. Arora believes that the exclusion of ranking members in setting up the Commission is unacceptable; he strongly objected to the lack of minority representation.

Rep. Abercrombie asked Rep. Arora if he would like to offer a friendly amendment to the bill.

Rep. Arora indicated he would offer a friendly amendment verbally as he had only received the language last evening.

Rep. Abercrombie, after receiving approval from LCO Marie Grady, asked Rep. Hughes if she would accept a friendly amendment.

Rep. Hughes indicated she would entertain a friendly amendment.

Rep. Abercrombie asked for a motion to accept Rep. Arora's friendly amendment to include minority representation on the Commission. The motion was made by Rep. Berthel and seconded by Rep. Santiago.

A voice vote was held, and the motion passed.

Rep. Arora commented that he appreciated the addition of minority representation, but strongly opposes the study irrespective of the amendment. He reemphasized his belief that government single-payer health systems have been a failure throughout history. Rep. Arora believes the Commission's study should focus on increasing competition rather than eliminating competition through the single-payer system this bill seeks to create.

Rep. Abercrombie asked the Clerk to call the roll on the bill as amended. The motion passed with 13 voting yea and 6 voting nay.

1. SB 956 AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. **JF to the Floor**

Rep. Abercrombie asked for a motion to JF to the floor. The motion was made by Sen. Lesser and seconded by Rep. Hughes. Rep. Abercrombie asked the committee if they had any comments or questions.

Sen. Moore commented that her desire for this session is to amend this bill to provide HUSKY coverage for undocumented youth up to age 18. She researched policy in California which provides health coverage for undocumented youth up to 138% of the poverty level. She noted that the language will be further developed prior to floor debate. Sen. Moore noted that she read through the emotional testimony of many individuals who are suffering from not having access to health insurance. She believes we have a moral obligation to address the healthcare needs of undocumented immigrants.

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

2. SB 1056 AN ACT EXPANDING ACCESS TO MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. JFS to the Floor

Rep. Abercrombie asked for a motion to JFS to the floor. The motion was made by Sen. Lesser and seconded by Rep. Hughes. Rep. Abercrombie asked the committee if they had any comments or questions; there were none.

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

Rep. Abercrombie stated that votes would be held open until 11:00 AM.

The Committee meeting was recessed at 9:50 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

David Rackliffe
Assistant Clerk

Heather Ferguson-Hull
Committee Clerk