

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5337

AN ACT CONCERNING A "FOOD IS MEDICINE TASK FORCE" AND HEALTHY

Title: EATING INCENTIVES.

Vote Date: 3/24/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

H.B. 5337 will assemble a group of individuals with nutritional expertise to expand nutritional assistance and incentivize healthier eating. This bill will particularly help lower income families and individuals get the nutrients they need to increase health outcomes across communities. Additionally, this task force will encourage more purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables, which are the most dependable source of vitamins and nutrients. Ultimately, this bill will help cultivate healthier eating habits across the state, which should translate into healthier future generations.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language for this bill deletes section 2 and re-directs this mission to be carried out by Department of Social Services, Department of Public Health, and the Department of Agriculture. This recognizes the key departments for this health incentive program, and how they can implement change.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, Deidre Gifford, supports the intent of the bill but is concerned about prematurely determining a strategy to encourage participation, which should be left to the discretion of the task force established. DSS suggests that the task force should be permitted to set the parameters and goals of improving

health outcomes for needy individuals and families through nutritional assistance. Additionally, DSS suggests that the work of implementing any strategies to commence after the task force report is submitted to allow for an evaluation period.

Executive Director of the Office of Health Strategy, Victoria Veltri, and Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Bryan Hurlburt, support this bill and the concept, "Food is Medicine." They are concerned about the feasibility of the strategies depicted in section 2 but would like to collaborate to determine the most efficient path forward for the task force.

Commissioner of the Department of Public Health, Juthani Manisha, supports the mission of the bill but opposes the portion of the bill requiring Head Start and early childhood centers to host office hours for the WIC program. Given the Covid-19 restrictions, this mandate would be difficult to accomplish, and strain staffing resources.

The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, supports the bill because it will encourage better, increased nutritional consumption of healthy foods, and economically support local farmers bringing their products to market.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Hartford Healthcare supports the bill, mentioning all the ways their medical centers are already attempting to increase the access to fresh fruits and vegetables. They urge passage of the bill and stand ready to be of assistance.

All the following individuals support this bill because it will serve as a first step to increase access to healthy food and address health disparities that exist in the state. This bill will combat food insecurity, assisting individuals that do not have readily accessible healthy food, due to financial barriers. It is important to invest in incentivizing healthy eating habits because it will reduce the prevalence and severity of diseases that are perpetuated by poor nutrition:

President of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Melissa Mitri
Food Security Chair of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Heather Peracchio
Member of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Linda Arpino
Member of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Kerry Coughlin
Member of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dr. Christie Devoe
Member of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Johanna Eichner
Member of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Allison Kallberg
Weight Management Dietitian at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Valerie Becker
Weight Management Dietitian at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Haley Duscha
Primary Care Pediatrician at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Dr. Nancy Trout
Pediatric Resident Physician at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Elizabeth Vargas
Clinical Nutrition Manager at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Jennifer Zarrilli
Director of UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health, Marlene B. Schwartz
Assistant Professor of Community and Public Health Nutrition, Loneke T. Blackman Carr
Transplant and Hepatology Nurse Practitioner, Samantha Lee
Connecticut Hospital Association
Connecticut Children's Gastroenterology Registered Dietitians, Hepatology, and Nutrition Dept
Student Liaison Co-Chair of Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Amy Corcoran

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Molly Lukiwsky

Date: 3/25/2022