

# Appropriations Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5431  
AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING RECEIVED BY THE STATE UNDER THE  
**Title:** FEDERAL AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT.  
**Vote Date:** 4/7/2022  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 3/18/2022  
**File No.:** LCO: 4356

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Appropriations Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

H.B. 5431 makes changes concerning the expenditure of funds received by the state under Federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Public Act 21-2 was a COVID-19 relief bill that required the Department of Public Health to establish a community health worker grant program to provide grants to community action agencies that employ community health workers. H.B. 5431 clarifies, revises, and expands the language of Public ACT 21-2 so that the language more closely mirrors the original intent of the legislation and properly aid various health programs.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### [Connecticut Department of Social Services.](#)

The CT Department of Social Services voiced support for H.B. 5431, as it revises sections 36 & 37 of Public Act 21-2, placing the community health worker grant program under the purview of the Department of Social Services. According to DSS, this more closely mirrors the intent of the original legislation of Public Act 21-2. DSS also supports section 5 of the bill, as it clarifies that Public Act 21-2's rate increase for intermediate care facilities is for the purpose of providing pandemic-related support. The Department further states support for section 6 of the bill because it strikes a provision added to the statute governing DSS's Temporary Family Assistance program. The DSS does however suggest minor revisions for section 2 of H.B. 5431, which would clarify that all Community Action Agencies may have the opportunity to apply for a grant to participate in the CHW program.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Mag Morelli, President, LeadingAge Connecticut.**

Ms. Morelli voiced support for H.B. 5431, specifically section 4 of the bill, as it makes modifications in last years legislation and allows the \$10-million that was included in the budget for nursing home facility grant support to be used instead to fund a 10% temporary rate increase for the month of June, which is needed. Ms. Morelli further stated support for the bill as the changes will also include \$12.8 million in the DSS budget to support the first year of rebasing in a new acuity-based rate system that is being addressed by the administration.

### **Deb Polun, Executive Director, Connecticut Association for Community Action, Inc. (CAFCA).**

Ms. Polun, on behalf of CAFCA, voiced support for H.B. 5431, specifically sections 2 and 3, as it provides a fix for a community Health Worker program the legislature created last year in Public Act 21-2. Specifically, the language of the bill transfers jurisdiction of the program from the Department of Public Health to the Department of Social Services; clarifies language to allow for the full \$6 million appropriated to be allocated to the Community Action Agencies; and extends the end-date of the program by one year to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. She stated that this legislation will help the Community Action Agencies enhance their capacity with Community Health Workers and meet the original intent of the legislature last year.

### **Ben Shaiken, Director of Government Relations, The Alliance.**

Mr. Shaiken, commented on H.B. 5431, specifically section 1, which amends an existing program at the Department of Public Health that provides student loan repayment funds to behavioral health providers within the states human service system. H.B. 5431 aims to expand this program created through legislation in 2021, and Mr. Shaiken urged the committee to expand it further, and amend the term 'primary care' in lines 8 and 12 of the current draft. Mr. Shaiken stated that this restricts eligibility for the program to only cover behavioral health practitioners who are employed at a community-based organization that provides primary care, which excludes other CT community-based nonprofit behavioral health providers. He shared that this is an issue, as currently CT's nonprofits are facing a workforce crisis, and workers with student loans are leaving to pursue jobs within the private sector that offers better support. Mr. Shaiken stated a desire to engage further on the bill.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

### **David Godbout.**

Mr. Godbout voiced opposition to H.B. 5431, as he believes that all bills made during the 2022 session are illegitimate, due to committees meeting via electronic means as opposed to in-person.

**Reported by: Ben McSheehy**

**Date: 04/20/2022**

