

Appropriations Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5435

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES AND THE EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID LITIGATION SETTLEMENT

Title: FUNDS.

Vote Date: 4/7/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/25/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Appropriations Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

House Bill 5435 establishes a task force to study substance use disorder (SUD) programs and services and to make recommendations concerning the expenditure of opioid litigation settlement funds. The task force will examine the state's drug abuse programs and services and offer suggestions on how the opioid settlement funds should be used. The task team will look at concerns while examining such programs and services. For example, adequate treatment and rehabilitation programs for those with drug use disorders are today accessible and required (s). This legislation also covers the regulation and operation of institutions that provide assistance to people with substance use disorders, such as opioid treatment dispensaries (s). As well as the state's existing spending on drug addiction programs and services, as well as the expected money needed to provide successful substance abuse programs and services.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#)

DMHAS supports this initiative and has been proactive in combating the opioid crisis, which has tragically persisted for years and has been aggravated by the pandemic's isolation and lack of treatment options. The proceeds from the opioid settlement can be used to augment several evidence-based initiatives focused at preventing and treating opioid addiction, as well as aiding persons in recovery. The funding will also be utilized to launch new initiatives. The \$26 billion worldwide settlement with Johnson & Johnson and distributors will increase

funding for substance misuse treatments for Connecticut residents by more than 10% over the next 18 years.

Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, Department of Social Services:

The Department of Social Services submitted testimony in opposition to the bill. DSS advised that House Bill 5044, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding the Use of Opioid Litigation Proceeds, is a better fit for the opioid settlement issue. The department believes that HB 5044, which creates an Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee, has a similar objective and intent as this measure, but also incorporates the restrictions imposed by the Attorney General's recent settlement agreement.

Jeffrey Beckham, Acting Secretary Office of Policy and Management

While Mr. Beckham and the Office of Policy Management support the establishment of a process to oversee funding received as a result of negotiated settlements with pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors related to the opioid epidemic, they respectfully request that the committee consider House Bill 5044, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding the Use of Opioid Litigation Proceeds. The Governor's bill is based on model legislation and was carefully constructed to conform to the settlement terms. It was created in close coordination with the Attorney General's Office. is opposition to this bill. Mr. Beckham explained that no local participation is included in House Bill 5435. Furthermore, he strongly feels that the deadlines set forth in House Bill 5436 would be impossible to meet, since they require the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management to submit a plan to the legislative committees of cognizance 10 days after receiving any settlement cash. The negotiated settlement agreements call for the creation of an Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee with a diverse spectrum of stakeholders and a public input process that could not be completed within the bill's timeframes.

Sarah Healy Eagan, Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate

The Office of the Child Advocate offered recommendations in regard to how the structure outlined in the bill and the anticipated dollars can benefit children. Ms. Eagan explained how children are affected by the opioid epidemic in a multitude of ways and how this bill can help lower that statistic. She offered that the framework for the settlement fund distribution should specifically address the needs of substance-exposed infants, children impacted by parental substance use disorder, children whose parents have died as a result of opioid overdose, and the need for investment in "two generational" services that can help parents and guardians access treatment. Ms. Eagan suggested that the Office of the Child Advocate be included in the membership of the task force, as the OCA would be able to provide crucial statistics and advocacy on behalf of children affected by the opioid crisis.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Luke A. Bronin, Mayor, City of Hartford](#) - Mayor Bronin proposed that any legislation aimed at determining the best use of the Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds include municipal leadership and representation. He offered that the costs and repercussions of the opioid crisis are felt most immediately at the local level, and initiatives to minimize opioid overdoses are frequently organized at the local level. As a result, he believes that it is both acceptable and critical for municipal officials to take a prominent role in the development of a settlement money allocation plan.

[Steven Zuckerman Chief Executive Officer, Root Center for Advanced Recovery \(RCAR\)](#)

Mr. Zuckerman testified that RCAR is in favor of the purposes of both HB5435 and HB5436, which aim to guarantee that opioid litigation settlement money is properly supervised. Mr. Zuckerman expressed support for ensuring that the money is used for opioid treatment and recovery, as well as looking into using some of the funds for new programs and treatment innovation. He stated that the state should be prepared to subsidize new treatment models when they are created, as so many people with addiction problems and little means are being left behind by the existing system.. Mr. Zuckerman encouraged the committee to take a more complete look at the opioid treatment and recovery system as the legislation moves forward, and to ensure that additional programs, such as residential treatment, be implemented. He added that opioid problem is still wreaking devastation on families and communities, and the state should not miss out on the chance to properly use these monies.

[Gian-Carl Casa, President & CEO, The Alliance](#)

Mr. Casa testified in support of the establishment of the task force. He spoke of the importance of decision makers having input from behavioral health professionals and from people who have lived with addiction and recovery.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[David Godbout](#) Mr. Godbout voiced opposition to the bill, as he believes that all bills considered during the 2022 session are illegitimate, due to committees meeting via electronic means as opposed to in-person. He stated that this violates the fourth amendment rights of CT citizens.

Reported by: Taylor Williams

Date: 4/14/22