

# Committee on Children

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-2  
**Title:** AN ACT EXPANDING PRESCHOOL AND MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN.  
**Vote Date:** 3/15/2022  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable  
**PH Date:** 2/25/2022  
**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

### COSPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.	Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Sen. Bob Duff, 25th Dist.	Rep. Lucy Dathan, 142nd Dist.
Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.	Rep. Stephanie Thomas, 143rd Dist.
Sen. Jorge Cabrera, 17th Dist.	Rep. Amy Morrin Bello, 28th Dist.
Sen. Steve Cassano, 4th Dist.	Rep. Kevin Ryan, 139th Dist.
Sen. Christine Cohen, 12th Dist.	Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.
Sen. Mary Daugherty Abrams, 13th Dist.	Rep. Robin E. Comey, 102nd Dist.
Sen. Mae Flexer, 29th Dist.	Rep. Anthony L. Nolan, 39th Dist.
Sen. John W. Fonfara, 1st Dist.	Rep. Julio A. Concepcion, 4th Dist.
Sen. Will Haskell, 26th Dist.	Rep. John K. Hampton, 16th Dist.
Sen. Julie Kushner, 24th Dist.	Sen. Dennis A. Bradley, 23rd Dist.
Sen. Matthew L. Lesser, 9th Dist.	Rep. Quentin Williams, 100th Dist.
Sen. Rick Lopes, 6th Dist.	Rep. Christine Palm, 36th Dist.
Sen. Douglas McCrory, 2nd Dist.	Rep. Maria P. Horn, 64th Dist.
Sen. Patricia Billie Miller, 27th Dist.	Rep. Jillian Gilchrest, 18th Dist.
Sen. Marilyn V. Moore, 22nd Dist.	Rep. Kate Farrar, 20th Dist.
Sen. Derek Slap, 5th Dist.	Rep. Josh Elliott, 88th Dist.
Sen. Gary A. Winfield, 10th Dist.	
Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.	

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill aims to address pandemic impact on childhood depression, anxiety and

developmental delays through the expansion of support services. The isolation of children from their support systems has highlighted the need for expanded access to new forms of mental health care and screening, as well as emphasized the role of the community and household in children's outcomes.

It tackles specific, individual hurdles in accessing and affording mental healthcare. It recognizes the integrated nature of child-parent wellness by addressing childcare availability and cost and in-school or sport standard practices.

Specific actions of this bill include but are not limited to:

- Limits the cost of school readiness program.
- Establishes wage supplement grant for childcare workers.
- Expands the Pipeline for Connecticut's future program.
- Expands mobile crisis response.
- Establishes a Social Determinants of Mental Health Fund, to assist families in affording mental health services.
- Requires the department of Education to develop a mental health plan for student athletes.
- Funds transitional housing for homeless juveniles.
- Sets safe storage of cannabis and prescription drugs notification requirements.
- Expands behavioral healthcare for children.
- Study of the impact of exposure to social media on young children.
- Emergency shelters, correctional facilities and public schools shall provide free menstrual products in a way that avoids stigmatizing.
- Local health departments etc. shall provide A-SBIRT training (adolescent screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment) designed by DCF.
- Clarifies and codifies notification and record keeping requirements in cases of illness or injury at group childcare settings.
- Seeks to expand childcare for infants and toddlers corresponding to a needs assessment.
- Expands Medicaid coverage for mental health services provided by MSWs.
- Creates the psychology interjurisdictional compact to expand the capacity and access to interstate telepsychology practices.
- Establishes a task force to study the comprehensive needs of children in the state and the extent to which such needs are being met by educators, community members and local and state agencies.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None Expressed.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

Senator Paul Formica submitted a set of requested language additions focused on removing barriers to early intervention, increasing recruitment of mental health professionals, helping

families navigate and access programs and improving screening for maternal mental health problems.

Mayor of Hartford Luke Bronin supports and requests the additions of "(1) expanding resources for mental and behavioral health treatment in youth detention centers; (2) Providing resources to Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) and Juvenile Review Boards (JRBs) and (3) Support the expansion of skills-building and job readiness programs, such as Hartford's Youth Service Corps.

Children's Therapy Services Executive Director and chairperson of the Birth To Three Interagency Coordinating Council Cindy Jackson explained the urgency of increased funding to the "B23" program and its essential role in family wellness, in regards to reimbursement rates and workforce development.

CT Women's Education and Legal Fund MSW intern Brandi Kennedy submitted the organization's support for SB2, citing the risk of collapse of the "already fragile system of childcare" and the extraordinary stressors of pandemic and post-pandemic life on young people.

Community Health Center Association of Connecticut Manager Sara LeMaster supports, citing that " this bill allows behavioral health providers to access loan forgiveness through the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority... HB 5040 currently before the Human Services Committee expands the State Loan Repayment Program to include behavioral health providers. Both programs will enhance our ability to recruit and retain behavioral health providers."

Integrated Health Services non-profit organization CEO Sherry Linton-Massiah support the proposed sentiments of SB 2, presenting that data demonstrates that developing early resiliency has the highest return on investments.

CSEA SEIU Childcare Organizer Steffi Martinez Frias supports Senate Bill 2 because it invests in mental health services for our children and can give providers the necessary tools.

Student at SCSU Hannah McKiernan supports SB2, reporting that at her "field placement at a children's bereavement center, I have witnessed firsthand how support services play a fundamental role in mitigating the negative outcomes associated with significant loss."

CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative Executive Director Carol O'Donnell SB2 addresses a critically important need in communities across the state, our state needs to expand behavioral and mental health services for young children and their families

CT Association of Public School Superintendents Executive Director Fran Rabinowitz asks for a change because the proposal lacks an essential component to include expanded funding for resources for behavioral health services and mentorship in schools as in early childhood and DCF. She expressed that schools provide a refuge for students, many of whom have experienced trauma in their families and communities.

CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Vice President as well as child care provider Maria Reyes supports, because she witnesses parents struggling to care for their own mental health with all of their other responsibilities and wants their needs to be met.

Parent and resident Catherine Lester Salchert expressed the need for improved mental health protocols in school regarding absences and lateness as signs of mental health troubles, for intervention regarding children with addiction and mental health issues, and for parity in coverage for self-insured patients.

Senate Democrats presented strong support for S.B. 2's measures to address increased needs for mental health and childcare support, particularly as results of the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes "critical measures to provide immediate relief for children and their families as they navigate mental health and behavioral health concerns."

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving rep. Chris Senecal wrote in support, saying that the bill addresses basic human needs including childcare and mental health services, as well as increased supports for older children who are disengaged from school or work.

CSEA member and treasurer of childcare union Jacqueline Ulloa shared that in her experiences, parental incomes were insufficient for affording childcare, bringing a mental health challenge to the family. She supports SB2 and increased learning and developmental opportunities for young children and parents.

CT Education Association Executive Director Don Williams supports SB 2, and it's allocation of additional resources to recognize trauma and mental health needs in schools.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed.

**Reported by: Jean Rienzo**

**Date: 3/31/22**