

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-205
AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH DAY IN
Title: CONNECTICUT.
Vote Date: 3/10/2022
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/1/2022
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Gary A. Turco
Rep. Bill Buckbee

REASONS FOR BILL:

S.B. 205 is designed to establish a day in the state to recognize and raise awareness about children's mental health. This practice empowers educators to include mental wellness practices and events in their curriculum and facilitates a broader conversation which can reduce the stigma in addressing and diagnosing mental health challenges.

The proposed substitute language for this bill specifies, in Section 2, that the Department of Education shall provide annual notice to local and regional boards of education about Get Outside and Play for Children's Mental Health Day and include with such notice any suggestions or materials for suitable exercises that may be held in observance of such day.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner of Department of Children and Families Vanessa Dorantes, supports the bill with recommended changes. Instead of a "Mental Health Day" DCF proposes an entire month as "Children's Mental Health Month."

Executive Director of Connecticut Children's Alliance Krystal Rich fully supports the bill. CCA believes the pandemic exacerbated what was already a growing mental health crisis among children, and it is important to recognize the on-going importance of children's mental health.

Director of Connecticut Education Association Ray Rossomando supports the intent of the bill but does not believe that it meaningfully addresses the needs of children experiencing mental health challenges or some of the conditions in schools that intensify them. CEA instead recommends reducing standardized testing burdens, raising kindergarten start age, promoting developmentally appropriate curricula in early grades, and incorporating the vision of the graduate into the school accountability system.

Commissioner Designate of the State Department of Education Charlene Russell-Tucker fully supports the bill, to raise awareness about issues relating to children's mental health and the positive effect that being outdoors has on children's mental health and wellness.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

MSW UCONN Student Kassandrah Banks supports this bill, stating that a mental health day in schools would remove the stigma surrounding mental health struggles. Banks also cites the significant mental health benefits that come from being outdoors and nature-related activities, and recharge before getting back into the classroom to face everyday challenges.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Molly Lukiwsky

Date: 3/16/2022