

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-289
AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT AND FUNDING OF THE CONNECTICUT
Title: FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE.
Vote Date: 3/17/2022
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 3/8/2022
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill will establish funding and oversight of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative and objectives for the initiative. The proposal improves on the current Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI). This legislation will enact an Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative within the Department of Social Services to be overseen by the Commissioner. The bill further defines the "Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative" (CFI) as an initiative that promotes the positive involvement and interaction of fathers with their children with an emphasis on low-income children and identifies services that effectively encourage and enhance responsible and skillful parenting and increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and emotional needs of their children.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, Department of Social Services, supports this bill. The testimony provides a background on the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) in relation to DSS. The CFI formally began with the passage of legislation in 1999, as key leaders at the local and state levels continued to see children who had been impacted by father-absence. This bill updates the existing CFI legislation to better reflect its current structure, partners, and goals, and further strengthen this robust public-private collaborative. Furthermore, the CFI Strategic Planning Workgroup developed and is currently implementing the strategic plan for the CFI. The plan, adopted by the Council in 2016, contains recommendations for short and long-term strategies to: address program, policy and system barriers; expand promising practices already being implemented; and establish new, and strengthen existing, partnerships at the state and local levels to support the results statements – "Connecticut

children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives” and, “All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children.”

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, offers support for this bill. The testimony states that families are strengthened by supporting fathers. Providing services and programs that aim to increase fathers’ positive parenting skills, effective communication, emotional support, and stress management have positive effects on children. A father’s involvement is an influential factor in a child’s wellbeing and future success. CFI promotes responsibility in fatherhood at multiple levels. It supports fathers in their personal responsibilities through various programs and interventions and the impact of these programs have yielded favorable results. Updating the existing statutory language will strengthen the initiative's infrastructure, ensure continued active participation of partners, and provide better supports to fathers and their children.

Connecticut Judicial Branch respectfully request that line 56 be amended to replace “Support Enforcement Services” with “Superior Court Operations” in that Support Enforcement Services is a unit within the Superior Court Operations Division.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Deb Polun, Executive Director Connecticut Association for Community Action, Inc. (CAFCA), supports this legislation. As stated in the testimony, CFI works with fathers with all aspects of their fathering role including the financial and legal responsibilities, as well as helping to foster an emotional connection with their children. Updating the statute, creating an office, and formalizing the advisory council will allow the Fatherhood Initiative to garner the attention and support needed to continue and potentially expand this program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Resident, David Godbout, opposes this bill. As stated in the testimony, all proposed bills within the Connecticut General Assembly are in violation of citizens' 4th Amendment Rights, citing the fact that many spaces in the Capitol and Legislative Office Buildings are currently restricted.

Reported by: Taylor Williams

Date: 03/24/2022