

Education Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6760

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CIVICS EDUCATION AND MEDIA LITERACY.

Vote Date: 3/10/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/1/2023

File No.: 278

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would establish the Connecticut Civics Education and Media Literacy Task Force. The quantity and quality of civics education a student receives varies across the Connecticut municipalities. In some municipalities, the civics education students receive may be considered inadequate. Surveys show that less than half of all Americans can name the three branches of government, with about a quarter of Americans being unable to name even one branch of government. The task force would review existing curricula and programs, determine which programs work best, and make recommendations to improve public civics education in the state.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[State Department of Education, Commissioner, Charlene M. Russell-Tucker](#): states that this bill as currently is unnecessary, as the department has already done much of the work being assigned to the taskforce. The department has worked with Civics teachers, state agencies, and private organizations to develop new curricula that enhances current teaching on civics and media literacy. As such, the department believes the creation of a new taskforce would be redundant. However, it is noted that they would be part of the conversation moving forward if the bill is to undergo changes.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity, Children's Policy Analyst, Thomas Nuccio](#): supports this bill, citing 2022 survey data which shows a

massive lack of civic engagement. He states that civics education can help to promote civic engagement.

Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council, Co-Chair, Amy Meyerson: writes her support for improving diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially as biases and prejudices are typically developed in childhood. She suggests additional explicitly stated learning objectives on religious literacy, dignity for transgender students, anti-racism, and gender equity.

E.O. Smith High School, Teacher, Joe Goldman: cites the importance and impact of civics education for students. He also states the importance of students understanding the democratic processes in our country, and with civics education, schools are the "nurseries of democracy."

Executive Director, School and State Finance Project, Lisa Hammersley: states her support as civics education helps students to recognize the value of being well-informed on the democratic process and becoming active voters. She states that early investments into children such as implementing this bill is an investment for future years when these students then become well informed members of the community.

Computer & Communications Industry Association, Regional Policy Manager, Alex Spyropoulos: writes his admiration for legislative efforts in education but suggests amending the bill to include the teaching of digital citizenship. He writes that protecting children from dangers online can be difficult and that there have been efforts to improve child safety online. He adds that teaching children of these dangers and how to safely interact online can drastically improve children's safety.

Connecticut Bar Association, Civics Education Committee Chair, Jonathan Weiner: notes that civics and history education have been declining in the past 50 years and with that there has been an evident through the political disfunction seen today. He states that better civics education, students learn the importance of the democratic process and their role within our democracy.

Connecticut Education Association, Executive Director, Donald Williams Jr.: writes his support for improving civics education as many Americans are unaware of how our government functions and the rights they have as citizens. He states that having an informed public ensures that these rights will never be compromised. He suggests amending the bill to include three teachers, two of which are social studies teachers, on the proposed task force to provide an actual perspective of teaching civics.

Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut, Legislative Chair, Andrew Feinstein: states that civics education can help students build skills in debate and advocacy, develop respect for other opinions, and learn how to collaborate to reach a common goal. He suggests adding a representative of the disability community on the proposed task force, as students with disabilities are often victims of bias.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Nicholas Coppola: states that the bill lacks a succinct definition of education goals and that legislators should not get in the way of teaching the relationship of individuals and

government. He also raises concern that media literacy will be used to discuss battling misinformation and will target republican sources, specifically regarding the pandemic.

[Kim Libera](#): states that topics such as nutrition, consumer skills, financial literacy, home improvement, first aid, health matters, and civics need not be formally placed into the curriculum. She also raises concern that including media literacy will be used to promote solely left-wing ideologies.

[Cheryl Marceau](#): states that civics education is already in the C.G.S.

[Debbie Esposito](#): submitted testimony in opposition to this bill.

Reported by: Sam Gilberti & James Carroll

Date: 3/17/2023