

# Appropriations Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6900

AN ACT CONCERNING THE BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

**Title:** OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

**Vote Date:** 4/20/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/28/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Appropriations Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

During the 2022 Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed Public Act 22-47, encompassing children's mental health reforms in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the establishment of a Behavioral and Mental Health Policy and Oversight Committee. HB-6900 changes the name of the committee to reflect its specific purview of Children's behavioral health, and alters the structure of the committee to build a comprehensive team to better evaluate and address the ongoing needs of youth.

Substitute Language in LCO 6661 mirrors the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee statute.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None expressed.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Connecticut Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board](#): The Advisory Board offered testimony expressing their concern to identify collaborative means to promote expediency in addressing challenges to achieving our common vision, not to reshaping the vision. They explained the consistent theme during their proceedings is the "fragmentation" of Connecticut's behavioral health system for children, and that efforts to align existing oversight and advisory functions continue to be an important first step toward a system that provides access to care by all children and their families based their needs. The Advisory Board

shared that six similar advisory and oversight bodies currently exist involving children's behavioral health and stresses the importance of finding the most expedient strategy to advance development of a seamless, coordinated, and integrated children's behavioral health system.

[Connecticut Hospital Association \(CHA\)](#): CHA submitted testimony in support of this bill and encourages the committee to shepherd the consolidation of advisory and oversight efforts impacting the children's behavioral health system. CHA recommended amending PA 22-47 in the following ways:

1. Add one representative who shall be a provider currently working in the emergency department of a hospital licensed as a general hospital; and
2. One representative who shall be a provider currently working in an inpatient psychiatric unit of a hospital licensed as a general hospital.

CHA echoed the recommendations of the Connecticut Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board recommendations, and emphasized that to achieve an optimal system that addresses the emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of all of children, requires efficient delivery of a comprehensive array of effective services and maximizing all available resources.

[Howard Sovronsky, Chief Behavioral Health Officer, Connecticut Children's Medical Center \(CCMC\)](#): Mr. Sovronsky testified in support of HB-6900, and expressed his gratitude to be appointed to the committee. He shared that state lawmakers took tremendous steps in 2022 to support children's behavioral health through new investments, programs, and supports. Mr. Sovronsky explained that he hopes to address the workforce shortage, as well as target behavioral health supports for our state's most vulnerable children and families, discover ways to support behavioral health providers, and help create the infrastructure to ensure last year's progress is impactful and sustainable.

[Jeff Shaw, Senior Public Policy Advisor, Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance \(The Alliance\)](#): Mr. Shaw testified in support of this bill, however, he shared his concern with potentially weakening of the role of the Behavioral and Mental Health Policy and Oversight Committee created in Public Act 22- 47. He explained that the was intended to work closely with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to ensure capacity exists to provide care for children and youth in crisis. He expressed fear that the proposed name change from "oversight" to "planning" may weaken the committee's ability to receive specific data that would be instructive toward developing policies that could assist the children's behavioral health crisis. He stressed that this committee has potential to elevate the most important issues across the children's behavioral health system and provide the legislature with better oversight into it, and urged keeping the oversight role intact.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Taylor Hyde**

**Date: 05/06/2023**