

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1108

AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE BY

Title: STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Vote Date: 3/7/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/2/2023

File No.: 151

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Rep. Kate Farrar, 20th Dist.

Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27th Dist.

Rep. Dominique Johnson, 143rd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would mandate public institutions of higher education with residential campuses to establish a comprehensive plan for student access to reproductive health care services, which is an indispensable measure. Access to reproductive health care services is a fundamental right that applies to all individuals, including college students. Without access to these services, students may face unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and other health-related adversities. College students often confront distinct challenges concerning their reproductive health, such as a lack of affordable or confidential reproductive health care services. Enacting such legislation would guarantee students access to the complete range of reproductive health care services required for their well-being and educational pursuits. Moreover, it would promote reproductive justice and reduce health disparities across diverse student populations. Therefore, establishing plans for access to reproductive health care services on college campuses is an imperative action for promoting the health and welfare of college students and ensuring equitable access to care.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The amendment to bill language Section 2 clarifies that students should only be referred to licensed medical providers when seeking reproductive healthcare at an institution of higher education. The amendment aims to ensure that students receive accurate and reliable information about their reproductive health care options. This is particularly important given

the history of misinformative and unlicensed medical advice given at pregnancy care centers. By ensuring that referrals are provided by licensed medical providers, students can be assured that they are receiving information that is based on sound medical expertise.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, President, Terrence Cheng](#): Expressed their willingness to conduct a feasibility study and propose a plan regarding the expansion of reproductive health care services for students on residential campuses, as stated in the bill. They also appreciate the requirement in the bill to identify the necessary costs and personnel for implementing the plan. However, they have raised concerns regarding the feasibility of the plan due to their limited staff, resources, equipment, and training, as well as the demand for the service. Their institutions primarily serve commuter populations, and their health services are tailored to support smaller residential populations.

[UConn Student Health and Wellness, Executive Director, Suzanne Onorato](#): supports the bill state that it would ensure access to full healthcare for students pursuing higher education in Connecticut. She states that UConn already offers a full range of reproductive health services and resources for its Storrs campus students, including preventive gynecological care, STI testing and counseling, contraceptive care, and emergency contraception at no cost to undergraduate UConn students. Also includes that UConn Health also provides comprehensive reproductive healthcare services, including abortion care and telehealth options. The University aims to remove barriers for students in accessing reproductive healthcare by formulating a plan that addresses financial costs, transportation issues, and childcare/class time/work restrictions.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Connecticut General Assembly, Reproductive Rights Caucus, Co-Chairs, Rep. Jillian Gilchrest, Rep. Matt Blumenthal](#): Supports the bill that will expand access to vital healthcare for young people throughout Connecticut who are studying at public colleges and universities. Connecticut students often must travel long distances to access reproductive healthcare, and this bill will ask higher education institutions to consider this burden and use its resources to develop a solution. This legislation is critical to ensure that Connecticut students have equitable access to necessary healthcare, especially in the face of the attacks on reproductive healthcare access coming from states across the country.

[Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Vice President Public Policy, Advocacy and Organizing, Gretchen Raffa](#): Supports the bill and states that many college students in Connecticut face various barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health care, such as insufficient access to birth control, referrals, and services, as well as rising costs. Given the ongoing attacks on reproductive rights across the country she emphasized that access to care is now more essential than ever. She adds that the bill is a vital measure that will help reduce obstacles and enhance access to reproductive health services at Connecticut's residential colleges and universities by either providing them on-campus or connecting students with off-campus resources. Finally, she urged the committee to vote in favor of the bill with revised language to ensure that students receive medically accurate, non-judgmental, and comprehensive health care options from licensed health care providers.

**The adopted amendment addresses these concerns.*

[Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund \(CWEALF\), MSW Policy Practice Intern, Ariana Gonzalez](#): supports the bill and states that it addresses the challenges and barriers faced by students in accessing reproductive healthcare and achieving bodily autonomy. It emphasizes the need for higher education institutions to provide necessary resources and care to ensure students' well-being while in school. She states that without a well-defined plan or process, students may end up seeking care from off-campus pregnancy centers that propagate misinformation. By improving access to reproductive healthcare, the bill has the potential to improve the overall health of future generations and support the educational success of current students.

[Pro-Choice Connecticut, State Director, Liz Gustafson](#): supports the bill and expressed their concerns about the limited access to abortion services for certain marginalized communities, including young people, Black, Latino, and Indigenous people, the LGBTQ+ community, and those with disabilities. They state that S.B. 1108 can help address these inequities by promoting greater access to pregnancy-related care and abortion services for college students. They add that this investment is necessary to safeguard students' bodily autonomy, support their educational and career aspirations, and ensure that they receive reliable medical advice from licensed healthcare professionals. They provided an amendment to the bills language to guarantee that students have access to reproductive healthcare services at any off-campus facility that is staffed by licensed medical providers. **The adopted amendment addresses these concerns.*

[Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Director of Health Professional Outreach, Ashley Starr Frechette](#): support the bill and states it would help domestic violence survivors by reducing barriers to their reproductive health care, including reproductive coercion, birth control sabotage, transportation issues, and economic insecurity. she emphasizes that all college students, regardless of their identity or financial status, should have timely access to comprehensive reproductive health care services.

[Connecticut Resident, OBGYN resident at UConn Health, Leigh Kowalski](#): supports the bill, states that it will improve access to reproductive health care for college students at public institutions of higher education. She states that the bill will enhance the safety of her patients in this age group and allow her to provide comprehensive medical care that is medically necessary.

[Connecticut Resident, Wesleyan Alum, Anonymous](#): Support the bill, they state that it addresses the barrier that limited access to reproductive healthcare services poses to the educational success of individuals who identify as women, who make up over 60% of the student population in Connecticut. The difficulty of accessing reproductive healthcare services for students without a car, particularly for medication abortions, is highlighted as a significant challenge. The bill would improve access to necessary reproductive healthcare services, supporting students' well-being, reproductive autonomy, and post-high school success.

The following people submitted testimony in support of this bill. All shared their personal experiences as students and their reproductive health and emphasized the significance of reproductive care services in public institutions of higher education:

[Connecticut Resident, Nicole Pasquell](#)

[Connecticut Resident, Student, Anissa Abboud](#)

[Connecticut Resident, Yale Student, Hannah Sproch](#)

[Connecticut Resident, UConn student, Allison Villano](#)

[Connecticut Resident, Yale Student, Daphne-Margaret Simo](#)

[Connecticut Resident, Yale Student, Samantha Dao](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[CT Pregnancy Care Coalition, President, Lisa Maloney](#): Opposes the bill and expresses her concerns about the limitations of the proposed bill that focuses on college students' access to reproductive healthcare. She suggests that the transportation assistance should cover a wider range of medical and mental health services beyond reproductive health care. She emphasizes that reproductive healthcare is not limited to abortion clinics and that pregnancy centers can provide other forms of support and services to pregnant individuals. Therefore, she urges the committee to revise the bill to include assistance for other healthcare needs to ensure college students have access to the care they need.

[Pro-life Council of Connecticut, Executive Director, Susan Smith](#): opposes the bill and states it's similar to H.B. 6618, that she claims proposes the use of taxpayer funds to finance abortions. She adds that the bill does not provide sufficient support for pregnant women who choose to keep their babies or give them up for adoption. Instead, she suggests that public higher education institutions should offer free services to pregnant women who wish to keep their babies or give them up for adoption. In place of providing unrestricted access to abortion, the author recommends that Connecticut focus on implementing programs that support pregnant women and their families with life-affirming options.

Reported by: Jazaira Perez-Acevedo

Date: 3/22/23