

# Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-108

AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS THAT

**Title:** LIMIT ACCESS TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.

**Vote Date:** 2/29/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/22/2024

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27<sup>th</sup> District

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill would require that the Department of Transportation and Office of Workforce Strategy study the transportation barriers to workforce development programs. According to agency officials, access to transportation is one of the most significant barriers faced by individuals with a low-income background. Requiring a study of transportation barriers would allow the development and implementation of programs to reduce the effect that a lack of access to transportation on employment opportunities for individuals with a low-income background would have.

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

[Office of Workforce Strategy, Chief Workforce Officer, Dr. Kelli-Marie Vallieres](#): opposes this bill stating that they believe it is duplicative of work already being done jointly by the OWS, DOT, and the 2Gen initiative.

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

[Paul Amarone, Advocacy Outreach Manager, Connecticut Business and Industry Association](#): submitted testimony in support of this bill stating that it would address concerns held by some of their member organizations about public transportation from the suburbs to workplaces in cities. It was stated that without addressing basic transportation barriers faced by students and employees, filling the nearly 100,000 job openings in Connecticut cannot be done. It also lists several of their member organizations facing transportation issues including employees needing to walk two miles to their employer from the closest public transportation

stop, the lack of notice given when a bus route from Bridgeport to Shelton was abruptly stopped due to funding issues, and a complete lack of transportation from schools and community colleges to employers. It also stated that the lack of transportation from cities to suburbs directly affects employment opportunities for many of the most marginalized demographics in the state.

[Connecticut General Assembly, Senator of Connecticut's 30<sup>th</sup> District, Senator Stephen Harding, and Senator of Connecticut's 31<sup>st</sup> District, Senator Henri Martin, and Senator of Connecticut's 34<sup>th</sup> District, Senator Paul Cicarella](#): support this bill stating that it addresses transportation issues that many young people, adults, and veterans face. Transportation is a key factor in a person's ability to find and maintain a well-paying career. It states that a lack of public transportation is especially prevalent in Senate districts 30, 31, and 34.

[Town of Berlin, Economic Development Department, Economic Development Director, Christopher Edge](#): supports this bill stating that the transportation barrier effects some resident's ability to find and keep a career in Connecticut. They recommend that other gaps in the transportation system, specifically the parts of it that go to employment hubs, should be more closely looked at as well.

[Job Development Specialist, Karen Schlossberg](#): supports this bill because of their experience with their clients who are financially unstable and reliant on public transportation. They list some examples of clients of their who have been burdened by the lack of public transportation. It states that residents are fortunate to have a large variety of workforce development programs, although transportation barriers limit access to those programs.

[Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Senior Public Policy Officer, Chris Senecal](#): supports this bill and offers to share what they are learning about the need for transportation in implementing workforce programs. They also note that through their own program evaluations, they have seen that lack of access to a car can be a significant barrier to participation in a workforce program. They also state the racial divide shown by census data when it comes to access to a vehicle, noting that racial disparities in access to a vehicle may exacerbate racial disparities in employment rates and income levels. They recommend examining the need for flexible funding support to address broader basic needs.

[Prospective Student, J'Waka Steele](#): supports this bill because they are a student looking to possibly attend schools in Connecticut.

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

See response from administration/agency.

**Reported by: Patrick J. Buckley**

**Date: 3/7/2024**