

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-126
AN ACT CONCERNING IN-PERSON HOME VISITS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
Title: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.
Vote Date: 2/29/2024
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/22/2024
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to prioritize the safety and well-being of children in families when a parent or guardian is diagnosed with a substance use disorder. In-person home visits are required for properly evaluating the environment and ensuring that enough assistance and actions are in place to minimize threats to child safety. By requiring these checks as part of safety plans, the Department of Children and Families can better monitor and manage potential risks, protecting vulnerable children.

Substance use disorders can have a major effect on a person's judgment as well as ability to provide a secure and stable environment for children. In-person home visits allow social workers to investigate living conditions personally, identify possible threats, and provide resources and connections to help the family overcome substance misuse difficulties. This preventative approach is key to protecting children and assisting families in difficulty.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[The State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families, Commissioner-Designate Jodi Hill-Lilly](#), supports this bill as part of its legislative agenda for this session. The testimony discusses and describes how DCF's in-person visits differ from the remote visits previously required due to the COVID-19 epidemic. This testimonial describes how to engage with

families coping with issues like substance abuse, which can be challenging when you're unable to confront the abuse directly and just have access to a computer.

[The State of Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate, Child Advocate Sarah Eagan,](#) supports this bill as part of its legislative agenda for this session. The testimony describes the impact of remote work in general on the quality and consistency of child protective care work. The testimony focuses on examples in which DCF workers did not conduct regular home visits or had much contact with providers, and how this can lead to mortality for children who do not receive adequate care.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[The State of Connecticut State Legislature, House Republican Minority Leader, Representative Vin Candelora,](#) supports this bill and its attempt to address child safety concerns. They feel that this law is an important step toward organizing appropriate protocols for DCF to protect children in at-risk households. They want to reduce the incidence of deaths among young children, and the first step is to ensure that these in-person visits occur on a regular basis.

[Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance, Senior Public Policy Advisor, Jeff Shaw,](#) supports this bill and its efforts to thoroughly assess the safety of a child's household. They believe the remote will simply not function since key information cannot be recovered over a screen as easily as they can in person. They also believe that in-person visits help workers and families to form trustworthy relationships that cannot be built solely through computer screens.

[Center for Children's Advocacy's, Law Student at UCONN School of Law, Brianna Rawl,](#) supports this bill and its efforts to safeguard children from substance abuse in their homes. They believe that when a child's parent(s) suffer from abuse of substances, it is incredibly difficult for both the parents and the children to grow and develop. They believe that ensuring DCF in-person visits will result in fewer fatalities and less typical scenarios, such as Baby Kaylee's death in 2022.

[Southern Connecticut State University, Student, Stephanie Tingley,](#) supports the bill's attempts to protect children. Tingley explains how she can relate to children who have substance-abusing parents, which led to her father's death. She discusses her father's negativity and physical abuse, and how no one knew because he didn't act like this outside of the home. Fortunately for her mother, her life was able to resume its normal course. However, she is aware that many kids do not have the same opportunities that she has experienced. She goes on to say that if DCF were involved in her household, they would be completely unaware of what was happening virtually. They'd have to physically come to her home.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Mickaelah Joseph

Date: 3/11/2024

