

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-349

AN ACT CONCERNING DYSLEXIA SCREENING OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE

Title: INCARCERATED.

Vote Date: 3/26/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/13/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

CO-SPONSORS:

Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Rates of dyslexia are higher in the incarcerated population and to help reduce recidivism and support the self-sufficiency of individuals, this bill would require screening for dyslexia upon intake into any correctional facility.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language delays the implementation and reporting dates to January 1, 2025.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Benedict Daigle, Assistant Public Defender, Office of Chief Public Defender: Testified in support of this bill, stating that it would give individuals with knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources the opportunity to move forward while incarcerated and in their return to the community.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Martin Looney, President Pro Tempore, Senate Democrats: Testified in support of this bill, stating that dyslexia is one of the most common causes of illiteracy and is more prevalent

among the incarcerated than the general population. While dyslexia should be discovered while a child is in grammar school, too many children are passed over with no support, which leads to too many of them landing in the criminal justice system. He believes that we have an obligation to identify and educate these individuals, which will help them be self-sufficient and reduce recidivism.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut

(ACLU-CT): She testified in support of this bill, stating that dyslexia is more prevalent in prison and that this bill can change people's lives. She also stated that Congress passed similar legislation in 2018 that required all incarcerated individuals be screened in federal prisons.

Allison Quirion, Founder of Decoding Dyslexia-CT: Testified in support of this bill, stating that while all school students in kindergarten through third grade are required to be screened for dyslexia, there has been a lack of “implementation and accountability” from the CT Department of Education, which can result in unreliable data and students who slip through the cracks. She believes a partnership between the Commissioner of Corrections and the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities (ODRD) could provide the frameworks to establish a screening system. She further urges the committee to ensure that this effort is properly supported and funded and hopes that there will be measures taken with appropriate interventions, programming, and support for those who are identified as at risk for reading failure and dyslexia.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Cody Richard: Testified in opposition to the bill because it does not outline the services that would be offered to individuals who display signs of dyslexia. He is also concerned about how the screening would be conducted and who would conduct it since healthcare workers in the Department of Corrections are already overworked and understaffed.

Reported by: Hillary Desideraggio

Date: 3-21-24