

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6728

AN ACT CONCERNING FREE RIDERSHIP FOR VETERANS ON MODES OF

Title: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ON VETERANS' DAY.

Vote Date: 3/11/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/13/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Chris Aniskovich, 35th Dist.

Rep. Michael DiGiovancarlo, 74th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill exempts veterans from having to pay bus public transportation fees on Veterans' Day and commissions a study from the Department of Transportation on the feasibility of expanding this one-day exemption to all forms of public transportation. The concept of alleviating the burden of public transportation on veterans always raises questions on the feasibility and cost of the benefit. This bill would take a step towards fully free public transportation for veterans both by exempting them from bus fares for one day of the year and by studying the feasibility of giving veterans free ridership on all modes of transportation.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Department of Transportation, Commissioner, Garrett Eucalitto: Mr. Eucalitto expressed his concerns with the implementation of this bill, pointing to the complexity of Connecticut's public bus transportation system. He explained that much Connecticut's bus transit system is administered by CTtransit, and twelve different local bus transit districts run the remaining routes, meaning coordinating fares between the different transit systems would be difficult. He also explained the differences between Connecticut's three rail transit services and why it would be difficult to coordinate a single-day exemption from fares exclusive to Connecticut.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Hubert Watson, Member, African American Black Affairs Council of Manchester: Mr. Watson expressed his support for two other bills, HB6768 and SB1277. He stressed the

importance of ensuring that veterans can afford a place to live, especially given the sacrifices they have made for this country.

Additional Testimony: Eleven individuals expressed their support for this bill and any measures that would help veterans. Testimony was provided by:

- **Robert Caffrey**
- **Nancy Comeau**
- **Randy Cyr**
- **Kieran Edmondson**
- **Kevin Kauffman**
- **Hannah Linnell**
- **Thomas Mead**
- **Peter Plona**
- **William Sacchi**
- **Robert Titus**
- **Robert Wnek**

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Brian DaConto: As a retired Department of Labor employee with experience servicing veterans, Mr. DaConto expressed his position that instead of limiting the free bus fares to one day, the committee should instead support SB775 and give veterans free bus transportation every day. He noted that a lack of transportation is a significant barrier to employment for veterans and that too often, a lack of transportation is the only thing keeping veterans from finding employment.

Reported by: Sam Sims

Date: 3/20/2025