

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6765

AN ACT CONCERNING ASSISTANCE WITH DENTAL SERVICES FOR

Title: CERTAIN VETERANS.

Vote Date: 3/11/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/13/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee
Rep. Jaime Foster, 57th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill establishes a program to give assistance vouchers to certain eligible veterans for dental care expenditures; these vouchers are to be redeemed at the UConn School of Dental Medicine or a federally qualified health center in Connecticut. While lots of different veterans' benefits are available at the state and federal levels, currently the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs only provides dental services to a small number of veterans; as a result, many veterans go without dental services. By offering assistance vouchers to eligible veterans, this bill would take a step towards expansive dental care for veterans.

In order to make the program more accessible to veterans across the state and more beneficial to Connecticut's public institutions of higher education, the substitute language of this bill allows veterans to redeem the assistance vouchers at any public higher education institute capable of providing dental services.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Sherri Marquis, Deputy Director, Somers Department of Veterans Affairs: As a Veteran Service Officer and Municipal Veterans Representative, Ms. Marquis expressed her support for this bill. She pointed out that despite its importance, dental health tends to be overlooked

when considering important veterans' benefits; she also noted that a slew of different conditions common among veterans can worsen an individual's dental health.

Emily Trudeau, Chair, Connecticut Bar Association Veteran and Military Affairs

Section: Ms. Trudeau expressed her support for this and her incredulity that dental care is seen as ancillary to medical care. She noted the irony that the military has rigorous dental screening prior to deployment, yet the state of Connecticut has yet to provide dental care to most veterans.

Allison Weir, Executive Director, Connecticut Veterans Legal Center: Ms. Weir expressed her support for this bill and her curiosity to see how it would be implemented. She noted that dental care services for veterans are incredibly in-demand to the point that pop up dental clinics for veterans get inundated with patients very quickly.

Samantha Seneviratne: As an MPH student at Yale University, Ms. Seneviratne expressed her support for this bill. She noted the lack of publicly assisted dental care available to veterans and how important dental hygiene is to their overall health and wellbeing. She went on to point out the large-scale impacts of veterans not having access to quality dental care, including hundreds of thousands of veterans experiencing productivity loss from oral health-related injuries.

Additional Testimony:

1. **Robert Caffrey**
2. **Nancy Comeau**
3. **Randy Cyr**
4. **Kieran Edmondson**
5. **Hanna Linnell**
6. **Thomas Mead**
7. **Peter Plona**
8. **Kristen Rzasa**
9. **William Sacchi**
10. **Robert Titus**
11. **Robert Wnek**

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Sam Sims

Date: 3/20/2025