

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6918

Title: AN ACT PROHIBITING FIRST COUSIN MARRIAGE.

Vote Date: 4/4/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/3/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Connecticut is one of roughly 18 states in the nation that allows for first-cousin marriages without any restrictions; this bill would prohibit marriage between first cousins.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language creates a new section applicable only to first cousins, and specifies that this would prohibit first cousin marriage prospectively on and after October 1, 2025. It also makes it so a violation of this prohibition wouldn't result in criminal penalties, nor will it result in the marriage being considered legally void under statute.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Donna Farland: She testified in support of this bill. She stated that she often finds people who support first cousin marriages are pedophiles and does not believe there is any reason to marry a first cousin. She believes that women are sold into marriages under the guise of first cousin marriages and asked the committee to pass the bill to stop pedophiles and traffickers.

Sansia Grant: She testified in support of this bill.

Mickee Hicks: He testified in support of this bill.

Stephen Mendelsohn: He testified in support of this bill. He explained that this bill will align Connecticut with other states that prohibit first cousin marriages as well as other countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. He explained that the genetic harm to children is underestimated and that in a recent BBC story, it was reported that negative health outcomes go far beyond the more obvious issue of recessive genetic disorders; these negative health outcomes include developmental, speech, and language difficulties as well as overall increased healthcare needs even if there is no diagnosed genetic disorder. He stated that the life expectancy for offspring of first cousins can be reduced by over three years. He believes that turning what should be a blood relationship into a sexual relationship is not a good thing on multiple levels, even when consensual.

Matt Viscione: He testified in support of this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Curtis Burney: He testified in opposition to this bill.

Patricia Buyce: She testified in opposition to this bill. She believes that marriage is a sacred gift from God, uniting two people in love and commitment. She stated that the Bible does not prohibit the marriage of first cousins and provided an example of the deep bonds of Isaac and Rebekah in Scriptures. She furthered that the church has recognized that marrying a first cousin is not against God's law and she believes it is not forbidden by natural law if children and family are not harmed.

Kyler Carbine: He testified in opposition to this bill.

Alex Davis: He testified in opposition to this bill, stating that first cousin marriage deserves more understanding and acceptance than it gets today. He stated that his parents are first cousins, and their marriage is the cornerstone of our family; together for 30 years, they have raised three children, building a normal and happy life. He believes there is a stigma around first cousin marriage due to worry over health risks and social norms and believes those risks are overstated.

Bob Dobson: He testified in opposition to this bill. He explained that as a congregant of The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints, he believes in the beliefs of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young on marriage; that is, it is divinely inspired, and is necessary for God's plan for families. He furthered that the marriage of first cousins was never seen as immoral or inappropriate since the early days of the Church and legal restrictions against polygamy and cousin marriage infringe on religious freedom, which is something that should be protected.

Sharon Greene: She testified in opposition to this bill.

Robert Jensen: He testified in opposition to this bill.

Ty Johnson: She testified in opposition to this bill, stating that it is an overreach both in historical context and personal choice. She explained that many influential figures in history married their first cousins, and it did not diminish their legacy and contributions to society.

She believes the bill will narrow the view of personal relationships and overlook the complex reality of family dynamics.

Emy Malaque: She testified in opposition to this bill.

Marci Pittman: She testified in opposition to this bill. She stated that Scriptures provides guidance about first cousins and explained that there is no biblical command forbidding first cousin marriages as long it is entered into it by love, faithfulness, and a desire to honor God's moral laws.

Sharon Sutton: She testified in opposition to this bill.

Tasha Williams: She testified in opposition to this bill. She stated that she has witnessed firsthand how banning first cousin marriage hurts the Black community. She explained that by making this a crime and stigmatizing first cousin marriages, you undermine traditional support systems. She furthered that many individuals keep wealth, land, and knowledge of the family by having first cousin marriages, thereby creating stronger communities. She felt like this was another attempt to break down the fabric of family structures and ignore the importance of traditions.

Reported by: Bonnie Gray

Date: April 4, 2025