

# **Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** HB-6951

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES.

**Vote Date:** 3/6/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 2/20/2025

**File No.:**

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## **CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Robin E. Comey, 102nd Dist.

## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Committee on Children

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

HB 6951 establishes a study on children's behavioral health services, requiring the Transforming Children's Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee to analyze the use of existing services, such as the United Way 2-1-1 Infoline, the 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, mobile crisis intervention, urgent crisis centers, and hospital emergency departments.

The bill also seeks to review outreach strategies, referral sources, and funding allocations, the bill mandates the development of a survey and reporting requirements for school-based health centers to improve data collection and response to children's behavioral health needs.

This bill will help to streamline and improve services for those who need it most.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

[Connecticut Department of Health, Commissioner, Manisha Juthani, MD](#): supports this bill and notes their work on the TCB committee. They highlight their support for section 1 which requires the study of children's behavior health centers and support section 2 regarding survey data collection around SBHCs.

[Connecticut Office of the State Comptroller, State Comptroller, Sean Scanlon:](#) strongly supports this bill and reflects on the mental health crisis in children that emerged following the pandemic. They mention the roundtable that was hosted that brought attention to SBHC's – and the recommendation of his office to expand data collection to all SBHC's in the state.

[Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate, Acting Child Advocate, Christina D. Ghio, JD, CWLS:](#) supports this bill and the funding for mobile crisis intervention, they do note that this does not address all the needs for mental health services. they also support the study on behavioral health service utilization and demand, collaborate with SBHCs to improve data collection, and develop standardized reporting requirements with the Department of Public Health.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[CT Cradle to Career Coalition, Policy Civic Engagement Director, Kathleen Callahan:](#) supports this bill and the critical step it takes to strengthen services through data collection, analysis, and service delivery.

[Jessica Connell:](#) supports this bill.

[TCB, Tri-Chairs, Senator Ceci Maher, Rep. Tammy Exum, Claudio Gualtieri:](#) supports this bill which aims to improve behavioral health services across Connecticut by identifying gaps in care and improving access. They add that these recommendations are essential for improving access to care and identifying needs in services.

[The Village, SVP, Strategy and Planning, Tammy Freeberg:](#) supports this bill and the system level planning that is represented in the bill. They note concern that without funding for Urgent Crisis Center's there will not be much to review.

[United Community & Family Services, Inc., President & CEO, Jennifer Grange, MPH:](#) supports this bill and review the importance of community health centers; they review the work they do.

[CASBHC, Executive Director, Melanie Wilde-Lane:](#) comments that there is a lack of a statewide data collection system which prevents a full understanding of their impact and the needs of students. They say that CASBHC and CHDI have proposed a comprehensive statewide data collection system which would allow for better tracking of services and outcomes.

[CWCSEO, Childrens Policy Analyst, TJ Nuccio:](#) supports this bill and the survey to obtain information on SBHC's and notes that Connecticut does not have a uniform data reporting system. They also state they appreciate the funding for DCF mobile crisis intervention services.

[Anonymous:](#) supports this bill and as a high school student and mentions the positive affect the bill would have in combatting eating disorders. They mention their sister has an eating disorder and that increasing accessibility to these services is essential.

[Yale Child Study Center, Clinical Director of IICAPS, Victoria Stob](#): supports this bill; specifically Section 1 of HB 6951 which looks to increase rates of Medicaid reimbursement for certain providers. Mentions the need of doing so for IICAPS they also request additional funding.

[Anonymous](#): supports this bill and mentions a civic action project they have been working on regarding eating disorders. They urge passage of this bill.

[Tow Youth Justice Institute, Executive Director, Erika Nowakowski](#): supports this bill; they support sections 1 and 2 regarding the studies and they support sections 3 and 4 regarding the 34/7 mobile crisis expansion. They reiterate the importance of these services.

[Tow Youth Justice Institute, Senior Project Manager, Emily Bobmbach](#): supports this bill and believes this bill will help to highlight gaps in services, and the need to review anticipated demand across services. They also add that this bill will help to highlight the need for data collections for SBHCs and the need for mobile crisis through DCF.

[American Academy of Pediatrics, Sandra Carbonari, M.D.](#): supports this bill and specifically the section that ensures funding for mobile crisis intervention service. They share personal stories on the need for these mobile crisis services.

[Center for Children's Advocacy, Executive Director, Sarah Eagan](#): supports this bill which aims to improve children's behavioral health services by identifying gaps in care, enhancing data collection on school-based health centers, and funding emergency mobile crisis services. CCA views this as key to addressing the growing mental health crisis among Connecticut's youth.

[Maureen Flanagan](#): supports this bill and as a retired juvenile probation officer, they see have seen firsthand the effects of inadequate behavioral health services. They urge passage of this bill.

[Yale New Haven Children Hospital, Yale Child Study Center, Vice-Chair for Clinical Affairs, Dr. Yann Poncin](#): supports this bill which aims to improve Connecticut's children's behavioral health services through better data collection, increased funding, and expanded mobile crisis services. They warn that Governor Lamont's budget proposal, which increases hospital taxes and reduces reimbursements could harm this bill.

[AFCAMP, Executive Director, Ann Smith](#): supports this bill and the latest initiatives to enhance and empower behavioral health systems across the state. They mention this bill is an opportunity to build on the work to address the current workforce and immediate funding challenges.

[CHDI, President & CEO, Jeffrey Vanderploeg, PhD](#): supports this bill and the intent to study the continuum of Crisis Services, they mention the study should first look into existing date reports to refine the questions underlaying the study. study school-based health centers and the funding for mobile crisis.

[Effective School Solutions, Chief Executive Officer, Duncan Young](#): supports this bill and it's intent and offers further recommendations such as a high acuity mental health program pilot at the start of the 2025-2026 academic year, examine the outcomes with current research on different avenues, provide early outcomes of the legislative report and allow schools to apply for the mobile crisis funding.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Christian Talarski**

**Date: 3/17/2025**