

# Public Health Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6978

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S  
RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE PUBLIC

**Title:** HEALTH STATUTES.

**Vote Date:** 3/5/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/26/2025

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill makes the following changes to the Department of Public Health (DPH)-related statutes and allows DPH to do the following:

- Use information from the maternal mortality review program to improve the accuracy of vital statistics data including cause of death.
- Renew a license without performing a physical plant inspection if the facility has maintained their federal certification.
- Distribute gifts, grants, or contracts to nonprofit local health partners.
- Take expanded disciplinary actions against health care institutions that fail to comply with public health statutes.

In addition, the bill allows the following:

- The Board of Examiners for Nursing to hold contested hearings before a hearing officer.
- The Rare Disease Advisory Council (RDAC) can apply for and accept grants and funds from various sources.

The bill also includes technical changes.

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

### **Manisha Juthani, Commissioner of DPH:**

The commissioner addressed each section of the bill highlighting the areas mentioned above in the reasons for the bill.

### **The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO):**

The CWCSEO supports section 1 of the bill to allow RDAC to apply for and accept external funding sources to provide essential financial stability for research initiatives, public outreach programs, and long-term planning that would be limited by state funding constraints.

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

### **Lesley Bennett, CT Rare Disease Advisory Council (RDAC):**

RDAC supports section 1 of the bill that will allow the council to seek and accept funds to cover council activities including the development of a website, educational materials for healthcare providers, schools, and state agencies, as well as the ability to conduct surveys regarding the needs of this population. Due to cuts at the National Institute of Health (NIH), this funding is more critical than ever.

### **Jackson Laboratory (JAX):**

JAX understands that patients and families dealing with rare diseases need a supporting infrastructure and JAX is committed to providing that effort. Through JAX's Rare Disease Transitional Center (RDCT) we work closely with foundations and scientists from around the world to facilitate research into treatment for rare diseases. JAX supports any efforts to ensure that RDAC has a means by which to advance their work.

### **Betsy Gara, Executive Director of Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA):**

Ms. Gara's testimony focused on protecting drinking water and water distribution systems. through regular surveillance by inspectors to detect and eliminate cross connections issues. A cross connection is "any actual or potential physical connection between a public water system and any source of non-potable liquid, solid or gas that could potentially contaminate the potable water supply by backflow". To address this issue, CWWA requests that language be included in either HB 6977 or HB 6778 to permit DPH to implement policies and procedures to administer provisions relating to the use, installation, and inspections of cross connection protections. Such efforts would protect the public health and safety of the customers of CWWA.

### **Thomas Barger, National Director, CT Section of the American Water Works Association:**

Mr. Barger submitted testimony supporting the comments of Ms. Gara requesting the inclusion of the language to address the issue of cross connection issues.

**Charles Hutchings:**

Mr. Hutchings requested that language proposed in HB 6563 -AAC the Effective and Safe Use of Patient Lifts for Patients with Physical Disabilities, which was not raised by the Public Health Committee, be included in this revisions bill. Mr. Hutching pointed out that lifts are critical to providing adequate healthcare for persons with disabilities and asked the committee to give this request careful consideration.

**Jay Tulin and**

**Mary Ann Langton:**

Both submitted testimony requesting the inclusion of language to provide lifts for people with physical disabilities be added to this bill.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Kathleen Panazza**

**Date: March 6, 2025**