

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7030

Title: AN ACT EXPANDING THE OPEN CHOICE VOUCHER PILOT PROGRAM.

Vote Date: 3/6/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/27/2025

File No.: 240

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Housing Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would continue the existing open choice school voucher program to 2028 and expand its applicability beyond Hartford. Expanding this program beyond the Hartford region would facilitate the integration of students from outside districts and increase access to those with limited income and transportation to their schools and available activities.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Jason Rojas, Connecticut General Assembly, State Representative and House Majority Leader:](#) Representative Rojas supported this bill, adding that since 2023, the Open Choice Voucher program increased student access to complete educational, social, and recreational activities by offering to relocate their families to the district where they attend school. This bill would build off these successes by expanding beyond the Hartford region.

[Tanya Hughes, Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Executive Director:](#) Tanya Hughes supported this bill, believing it will eliminate the segregation and isolation of school children by relocating them to integrated schools and communities, increasing their opportunities for participation in after school activities, and engagement with classmates. The program recruits interested landlords and offered housing relocation assistance, as well as counseling to eligible.

[Raphael L. Podolsky, Connect Legal Services, Attorney and Policy Advocate:](#) Raphael Podolsky supported this bill and the benefits of expanding this program to districts participating in interdistrict attendance. Podolsky further expressed that the program should be expanded and made permanent, and additional aid should be authorized for the integration of school communities.

[Ray Rossomando Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations, Connecticut Education Association:](#) Ray Rossomando supported this bill as an innovative approach to building stronger and more diverse communities that lead to equitable and important opportunities for students and community members.

[Chris Senecal, Hartford Foundation, Senior Public Policy Officer:](#) Chris Senecal supported this bill and stated this program allows for the ability to move towns to create stronger and longer-lasting relationships with school staff and community members. Senecal continued by stating the program furthers student's education by providing free trainings in topics such as construction and carpentry for those who are 18-24, and offers educational pathways for those returning from juvenile incarceration.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Arianna Tsikitas

Date: 3/18/2025