

Public Health Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7080

AN ACT CONCERNING NEUROMODULATION TREATMENTS FOR

Title: VETERANS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER.

Vote Date: 3/12/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/3/2025

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Neuromodulation is a minimally invasive treatment option for veterans suffering from various service- related conditions. The treatments involve altering nerve activity through electrical stimulation or chemical agents. This bill would require University of Connecticut Health Center to establish a Center of Excellence for Neuromodulation and to collaborate with an in-state hospital to provide these treatments at the center. The bill appropriates \$2 million dollars to UConn in fiscal year 2025 to provide the treatments and follow-up care.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Henry Genga, Representative 10th District, Connecticut General Assembly (CGA):

Connecticut has a responsibility to honor and support its veterans, particularly those suffering from challenges, both physical and psychological, as the result of their service to our country. Neuromodulation is a treatment intervention for many disorders that disproportionally affect combat veterans. The \$2 million allocated in this bill will be used to expand neuromodulation capabilities at UConn and Hartford HealthCare. Hartford HealthCare will receive the funding for both parts of the program and reimburse UConn Health for the surgery. This funding will enable the recruitment of leading physicians and researchers to advance cutting edge research with clinical care directly benefitting our veterans.

Jaime Foster, Representative 57th District, CGA, Chair of the Veterans the Military Affairs Committee:

Neuromodulation provides a minimally invasive, life-changing treatment option for veterans suffering from PTSD, depression, chronic pain, strokes, and other service-related conditions. Under this bill, veterans would gain access to these vital therapies through a newly established and state-funded center at UConn in collaboration with Hartford HealthCare. By establishing this center, we can dramatically improve the quality of life for our veterans, reduce dependence on medications, and offer hope to our veterans for a healthier future.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Dr. Subramani Seetharama, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Hartford HealthCare:

Dr. Seetharama has worked closely with individuals who have experienced severe disabilities including Connecticut veterans. Traditional therapies have helped many of his patients but due to the limited ability of the brain and spinal cord to regenerate themselves, these injuries often lead to life-altering permanent impairments. Limb amputations present profound challenges. Neuromodulation represents hope for stroke, spinal cord, and brain injury patients and for pain management from amputation. Neuromodulation techniques hold the promise of enhancing neural plasticity that can improve function, pain, and even cognitive performance.

Dr. Gregory DeGrunchy, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Hartford HealthCare:

Neuromodulation has the potential to create a new approach for brain recovery and healing. Dr. DeGrunchy focused his testimony on individuals who have experienced a stroke and explained that this treatment can even be effective many years after an individual has had a stroke. Many veterans, including himself, were subjected to environmental exposures such as burn pits and Agent Orange, that have greatly increased their risk for stroke. It is not an exaggeration to say that the technology proposed for this study is a revolution that can redefine recovery after a stroke.

Dr. Christopher Conner Department of Neurosurgery, UConn School of Medicine:

Stroke is the leading cause of disability, and it is largely an ignored condition. People who are affected withdraw and both patients and providers lose hope. The interest in this treatment is staggering. I have been contacted by over 70 individuals who wish to discuss this treatment and be evaluated for it. I am happy to announce that our team will perform our tenth implantation at UConn next month and we have four more patients scheduled for June. We also plan ten more in the second half of the year. Our veterans deserve access to this groundbreaking therapy.

Linda Blick, Co-Founder, Veterans with Disabilities Task Force:

The veterans Ms. Blick helps to support are mostly 100% service-connected disabled due to injuries sustained in combat or caused by deployment next to burn pits resulting in chronic painful diseases and even death. She has worked with veterans as young as 30 years old

who are having strokes. There is hope for these veterans due to the collaborative medical advances and specialists from UConn Health and Hartford HealthCare.

Bill Palifka, Army Veteran:

As a veteran, Mr. Palifka has witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of chronic pain, traumatic brain injuries, and PTSD on those who have served our country. The Neuromodulation Center offers an innovative and evidence-based approach to addressing these conditions. Veterans in Connecticut should not have to travel out of state or endure long wait times to access these critical services. This legislation is not just about health care; it is about honoring our commitment to those who served.

14 individuals, some of whom are veterans, shared their personal stories in support of this legislation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza

Date: March 14, 2025