

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7159

AN ACT CREATING YELLOW ENVELOPES TO PROMOTE
ACCOMMODATION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FIRST RESPONDERS
AND PERSONS WITH COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS OR PHYSICAL

Title: DISABILITIES AND PROMOTING THE BLUE AND YELLOW ENVELOPES.

Vote Date: 3/19/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires CWCSEO, in consultation with the DMV, state associations of police, fire chiefs, EMS personnel, and an organization that advocates for people with cognitive impairments and physical disabilities to design yellow envelopes that hold important identification paperwork, as well as information about a person's physical disability or cognitive impairment, and information on how to accommodate said person's needs to a first responder. The bill requires the development of various public awareness materials related to the yellow envelopes and for the dissemination of the envelopes and public awareness materials to various entities. It also requires that the DMV, law enforcement, or emergency services to provide these envelopes to a person with a cognitive or physical impairment upon request and that the CWCSEO provide training, in coordination with at least one organization that advocates for people with cognitive impairments or physical disabilities and SCSU, on how to handle incidents, promote accountability, and enhance interaction and communication with a person that is cognitively impaired or physically disabled to emergency services. This bill aims at creating a better understanding between first responders and people with cognitive impairments and physical disabilities after incidents occurred where first responders were unaware of individual's impairments or disabilities creating environments where the needs of the individual were not met, and situations escalated because individuals were not able to communicate their needs and disabilities or impairments to first responders.

REASONS FOR SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language makes the DMV the primary party for developing and disseminating the yellow envelopes instead of CWCSEO, at their request, and makes minor changes to the CWCSEO training provision.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Steve Hoffman, Chair, Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service Organizations and Fire Chief, Colchester Fire & EMS

Mr. Hoffman Supports the bill, as it will help improve the quality of interactions and service that first responders will be able to provide for their community and will give first responders a clear signal that they are working with an individual with special needs and ensure a better understanding and response. Furthermore, the bill also will help reduce any confusion or anxiety of the individual in need. It will strengthen the trust that individuals with special needs have in first responders and allow them to be treated with respect. The training aspect will improve overall service and interactions and the incorporation of yellow envelopes will help to improve inclusivity and promote compassion for everyone.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Chris C, Special Education Teacher

Supports the bill, highlighting the struggles that his student faced with limited or no verbal language and social awareness. He highlights the importance of first responders being able to effectively communicate with children with intellectual disabilities, which yellow envelopes containing information about an individual and the disability would do, as well as foster compassion for their differences.

Bob Abate, Retired firefighter

Mr. Abate supports the bill, noting his personal experience as a retired firefighter and grandfather of a child on the spectrum. He notes the importance of the blue envelope program and distinguishing other disabilities to help emergency medical professional to assess emergency situations.

Louise Abate

Ms. Abate supports the bill, noting her personal experience as a grandmother of a young autistic boy and as an operator of a home daycare, and emphasized the importance of responder to be aware of how to handle situations when working with people of different disabilities.

Christina Augliera

Ms. Augliera supports the bill, noting her personal experience as a mother of a child with autism, intellectual disabilities, and speech impairment. She notes that this keeps loved ones with disabilities and first responder safe in emergency situations as first responders can sometimes be the only form of immediate contact a personal with disabilities has. She argues that this bill ensures that they have the proper training and can give parents a little bit of ease as their children with additional needs navigates the world.

Amanda DuBois

Ms. DuBois supports the bill, noting her personal experience as a provider who works with individuals with special needs. She emphasizes that this bill is essential for first responders and their communities.

Andrea G

Supports the bill, coming from the perspective as a mother of two special needs children. She believes that this bill will help her children in situations where she cannot be their voice and notes these envelopes are profoundly impactful and valuable tool in ensuring that law enforcement safeguards the children of their communities.

Monica Santos, Owner, A Behavioral Approach LLC

Ms. Santos supports the bill and says it will support individuals with special needs and will give important info to officers needed to support those individuals. She advocates for training on both envelopes so that first responders are well equipped to support children and adults with special needs.

Kathryn Strout

Ms. Strout supports the bill, coming from the perspective of a mother of an adult with autism and the daily fear that her son will be misunderstood by first responders as he gains independence and navigates the world on his own. She notes the importance of these envelopes in unifying first responders with the people that need this assistance the most and says that interactions with law enforcement and individuals with special needs can go positively and negatively. She acknowledges that diffusing negative interactions can result in peace and the immediate understanding of the situation, and the individual they are interacting with firsthand through the use of the envelopes, would provide an extra level of protection for the parents and can make a huge different to her son and first responders.

Wolf Madsen

Mr. Madsen supports the bill, sharing personal experiences of several negative interactions with the police that left them feel misunderstood. Even though he made clear to law enforcement that he had a neurological disorder, he was treated as if he needed discipline, not understanding. He advocates for more training for police officers to help those with other disorders and disabilities, and emphasized accountability in these situations to prevent encounters like the ones he went through.

The following individuals offered broad support for the bill.

- John Rodican
- Carla Foster
- Jane Roth

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Patrick Riley

Date: 3/24/25