

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7172

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE SEWAGE RIGHT-TO-KNOW ACT.

Vote Date: 3/24/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/17/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.
Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.
Rep. Julio A. Concepcion, 4th Dist.
Rep. Hector Arzeno, 151st Dist.
Rep. James Sanchez, 6th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently, the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection relies on an ineffective system to keep the residents of Connecticut updated of any sewage spills. Thanks to the system giving delayed updates on their website and relying on a social media platform some people cannot access, the risk of exposure to waste increases. When people get exposed to sewage spills through activities like swimming or fishing, they put themselves in medical danger. The proposed bill would require DEEP to implement a real-time public notification system independent of any social media platform that can send alerts directly to people's phone, email, or text. This notification is required to send no later than two hours after the Department receives a sewage spill report.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

While DEEP's submitted public hearing testimony does not explicitly state support or opposition, they express concern over the resources required for this bill's intent. Currently, the Department operates an online platform for sewage reports, which currently takes staff

and time to keep updated. It is not properly equipped or set up to automatically provide subscribers texts or email alerts. Updating the system, and maintaining it, necessitates a technological upgrade since manual operation is unfeasible given their current staff resources. It takes time to develop such a technological upgrade, the Department speculates likely years of time thanks to their lack of staff resources they can dedicate to it.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Dep. Speaker Pro – Tempore Geraldo Reyes Jr., 75th District

In his public hearing testimony, he described the existing social media account DEEP created to provide the public notifications. This account was made on Twitter (now "X") and is inaccessible to anyone without an X account. He expresses support for this bill requiring DEEP to send notifications directly to people without social media. When people are aware that local waters are dangerous, they know to avoid activities that expose them to pathogens. An effective notification system will positively affect Connecticut residents' health.

29 citizens expressed support.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Phoebe Mann

Date: April 1, 2025