

## Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7202

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING.

**Vote Date:** 3/18/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/11/2025

**File No.:**

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### REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill will establish a board responsible for overseeing law enforcement training, establish a collaborative project with social workers and law enforcement at Southern and Central Connecticut State universities, and establish a curriculum for law enforcement trainings concerning disabled individuals.

The bill is necessary as it will help minimize misunderstandings between law enforcement officers and individuals with disabilities who are suffering a crisis. Such misunderstandings may lead to incarceration where it is not needed. The collaboration between social workers and law enforcement will help ensure that officers have the tools necessary to communicate and interact with disabled individuals and potentially divert said individuals away from incarceration.

**SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

Section 1 was removed.

Section 5 was added which is requiring the Police Officer Standards and Training to conduct a study of training programs that police officers are required to complete.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:****Patrick J. Griffin, Chief State's Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice -- Supports**

Griffin expresses broad support on behalf of the Division of Criminal Justice. The testifier notes that creating and maintaining programs of continued education for law enforcement officers are essential to staying ahead of changing investigative techniques. Additionally, the testifier is in support of the collaboration between social workers and law enforcement at Southern Connecticut State University.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:****Bob Duff, Senate Majority Leader, Connecticut General Assembly**

Duff references a study that demonstrates that individuals with developmental disabilities are up to seven times more likely to come in contact with police when compared to those without disabilities. Many incidents have occurred because of a general lack of understanding on behalf of police officers on how to interact with those who have disabilities mentioned in the bill. This bill would require officers to receive training on how to interact with aforementioned individuals, helping to avoid misunderstandings.

**Julie Schnobrich-Davis, PhD, Professor, Central Connecticut State University**

The testifier believes that it is important to provide police officers with specialized trainings as is done in the bill to better allow police officers to interact and serve the public. The testifier discusses their role as an educator and how they have worked with law enforcement to create a Detective Methodology program at their university. They note that feedback from law enforcement has demonstrated that further training is necessary.

**Eric Dlugolenski, PhD, Assistant Professor, Central Connecticut State University**

Dlugolenski finds that the bill and its provisions will ensure that law enforcement is properly equipped with the skills needed for modern policing. Furthermore, the legislation would position Connecticut at the forefront nationally for the standardization of investigative and leadership trainings for law enforcement. Additionally, the bill strengthens training for officers on how to interact with individuals with various disabilities.

**Zulma Toro, President, Central Connecticut State University**

Toro is in particular support of section 3 of the bill which would establish a police training center at Central Connecticut State University. Toro believes that the university is uniquely situated to address the training needs of law enforcement. Additionally, they find that there is a compelling need for training services specifically for detectives in the state.

**Jennifer FitzGerald, APRN**

FitzGerald has noticed a significant decline in Connecticut Residents' mental health in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In many cases, emergency services are turned to during mental health crises. A partnership between law enforcement and mental health service providers would help address the challenges faced by law enforcement officers in this regard.

**Isabel Logan, Ed.D., LCSW, SWLE Project**

Logan supports the establishment of the Social Work and Law Enforcement Institute at Southern Connecticut State University. They find that the institute would help police social workers and the like develop best practices through training. Additionally, the institute can provide technical support to law enforcement offices who partner with social workers. The institute will help analyze the effect of a police social work model on communities.

**Hailey Messier, MSW Policy Practice Student, University of Connecticut**

Messier finds that social workers are better able to provide long-term support than police officers during mental health crises. Furthermore, the proposed legislation will reduce arrests and help aid recovery efforts for those suffering from a mental health crisis. They point to research demonstrating the positive impact of integrating social workers with law enforcement. They believe the bill will help create safer and more compassionate communities across Connecticut.

**Louise C. Pyers, M.S. B.C.E.T.S., Founder & Executive Director, CABLE**

Pyers finds that the bill will educate officers about various disabilities and equip them with the de-escalation skills necessary to properly aid individuals in crisis. Furthermore, the legislation will emphasize active listening and empathy on behalf of law enforcement officers. It will result in the diversion of individuals from the criminal justice system to mental health services and will create partnerships between law enforcement and social workers.

**Lieutenant Matthew Solak**

Solak finds that police social work makes sense as it allows for social workers to be introduced into a situation where an individual may be having a mental health crisis rather than a law enforcement officer. Solak finds that police social work is a sustainable collaboration and helps reduce risk of arrest.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Olivia Rinkes**

The testifier is concerned with section 4 of the bill as they believe no level of training for law enforcement will be sufficient in replacing mental health resources. Rinkes finds that the resources allocated to this bill would be better used expanding access to affordable healthcare for individuals with mental and physical health needs. In general, the testifier is opposed to combining the role of law enforcement and mental health resources.

**Reported by: Jack Stein**

**Date: 3/31/25**