

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7213

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE.

**Vote Date:** 3/27/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/17/2025

**File No.:**

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## SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

## REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill provides for the following:

- Allows minors to give consent for services, examination, or treatment related to pregnancy and pregnancy prevention without the consent or notification of the minor's parent or guardian.
- Prohibits physicians or other health care providers from divulging any information relating to pregnancy or pregnancy prevention services provided to a minor's parent or guardian without the minor's explicit consent.
- Clarifies that any parent or guardian not informed of such services shall not be liable for the cost of such services.
- Repeals the statute requiring the Department of Public Health (DPH) to adopt regulations relating to abortion services in outpatient clinics

Substitute language adds provisions repealing DPH's general regulations on abortion, not just the regulation on clinics as was in the underlying bill.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

### **Jillian Gilchrest, State Representative, Connecticut General Assembly (CGA):**

Rates of abortion are significantly higher for minors than the general population as well as higher rates of maternal mortality, infant mortality, preterm birth, low infant birth weight, and other maternal complications. In Connecticut, minors are permitted to access reproductive healthcare, but access is not guaranteed. Connecticut law only permits minors to consent to care for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, abortion, mental health, and substance

use. Minors need secure access to reproductive healthcare because they are the future adults of our society and deserve the respect that is afforded to adult members of society. H.B. 7213 enables the state to take steps toward ensuring laws protecting minors in the framework of reproductive justice.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Dr. Nancy Stanwood, Chief Medical Officer, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England:**

Minors in Connecticut have generally been able to obtain contraceptive care for decades, but potential changes at the federal level, especially to programs like Title X, could directly threaten this access. Young people who are deterred from seeking care due to confidentiality concerns not only fail to receive needed care but also face a substantially higher likelihood of other risk factors related to sexual and reproductive health, substance use, and mental health. We know that most young people voluntarily tell a parent about their pregnancy, and if not, most tell another trusted adult. Young people who choose not to do so have valid reasons for not telling their parents — such as fear of abuse, the loss of their home and financial support, having an incarcerated parent, or being in the foster care system. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society of Adolescent Medicine, the American Public Health Association, the American Medical Association, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists all recommend and support young people's access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, including pregnancy care, without mandated parental involvement.

### **Melanie Wilde-Lane, Executive Director, CT Association of School Based Health Centers:**

This bill clarifies already established laws to support the current standards of care. These laws are in effect to protect adolescents. Connecticut law allows minors 13-18 to receive emergency medical treatment, HIV testing, mental health services, abortions, and STI tests without parental consent. Connecticut's medical providers deserve legal clarification when providing contraception and pregnancy testing to adolescents. We need laws that support our providers in delivering quality healthcare for adolescents. School-based health centers empower adolescents to manage their health.

### **Jamie Forbes, Social Justice Council, Westport:**

Ms. Forbes believes strongly in a woman's autonomy over her own body and that reproductive health care is an essential part of healthcare in general. Healthcare should include everything from contraceptives to abortion to childbirth and postpartum care.

### **Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT):**

Abortion bans disproportionately hurt young people and their ability to access health care. Federal and state governments have restricted access and continue to undermine young

people's access to comprehensive sex education, birth control, pregnancy-related care, abortions, and more. Connecticut state statutes protect a minor's ability to confidentially consent to many health care services, but current law does not explicitly include statutory protections for minors to consent to pregnancy-related care and contraceptive care. HB7213 is an important statutory clarification that would prevent unnecessary delays in the provision of evidence-based health care.

**Others in support of this bill:**

- Liz Gustafson, MSW, Connecticut State Director Reproductive Equity Now.
- Stacey Wyner, APRN, FNP-C.
- Megan Scharrer, Policy Advocacy Manager, Hispanic Health Council.
- Amanda Rostkowski, MD/PhD, Yale
- Mellisa Pensa, MD, MPH, FAAFP, Interim Chief Medical Officer, Fair Haven Community Health Care.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):**

CHA worked with various stakeholders to ensure that the language of HB 7213 would not have unintended consequences. Unfortunately, a key point of those discussions is not accurately reflected in the language of the bill, making all of Section 1 objectionable as written. Section 1 of the bill is highly problematic. It puts too broad a prohibition on healthcare providers with respect to patient health information. As drafted, section 1 of HB 7213 would create a dangerously incomplete longitudinal medical record and is not designed for the current electronic health record environment. The prohibition in subsection (c) must be made specific to the provider not sharing the information with the patient's parents or guardians unless the patient consents.

**Robert Hale Jr., Hale Law Firm:**

The bill's proposed expansion of reproductive care services to minor children without the consent or notification to the child's parents appears to be an unconstitutional violation of the rights of parents to protect their children from possible physical, emotional, and spiritual harm. The secrecy under which the bill proposes to hide the transaction between health care providers and minor children raises serious concerns about the nature and content of the services. The most alarming proposal in this bill, however, is the proposed repeal of nearly all regulation of abortion facilities currently provided pursuant to C.G.S. § 19a -116, and Section 19a-116-1 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

**Anne Manusky, M.Ed. National Director, Republican Assembly:**

Connecticut Democrats continue to make evil bills against the people of Connecticut, and especially against the children. This bill is another attempt to have the state usurp the parent's role in providing guidance and authorization to a minor. We have hope in the future due to the leadership of President Trump, and, with his administration, they will transform our nation back to a constitutional republic and rule by the laws of the Constitution.

**The following are Connecticut residents in opposition to this bill:**

- Shannon Turner
- Karen Banks
- Marlane Fitzgerald
- Mona Colwell
- Linda Dalessio
- Marcella Kurowski

**Reported by: Dave Rackliffe, Asst. Clerk**

**Date: March 31, 2025**