

Judiciary Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7250

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE

Title: JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

Vote Date: 4/4/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/26/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Travis Simms, 140th District

REASONS FOR BILL:

Every year, the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) works on recommendations to further the goal of taking care of Connecticut's at-risk youth. This bill enacts those recommendations, which have to do with gender responsive care and plans resulting from various subcommittee work.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language makes various revisions at the request of the JJPOC, particularly regarding the creation of a State Advisory Group (SAG), as well as a reporting date change in Section 5 per the suggestion of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP).

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

External Affairs, Judicial Branch: The Judicial Branch is in support of this legislation, having contributed to the writing of the bill, however they point out that implementing section 7 would strain the Branch, requiring additional resources.

Patrick Griffin, Chief States Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice: Attorney Griffin

supports this legislation because it aims to address the juvenile justice system and Connecticut's response to issues faced by the at-risk youth population. He strongly supports the bill, except for sections 2 and 3, which they take no position on.

Renee Cimino, Director of Delinquency Defense and Child Protection, Office of Chief Public Defender: She supports this legislation because it codifies the recommendations approved by the JJPOC with regards to expanding the JJPOC's membership, and the requirement of the State Department of Education to report to the JJPOC. She added that the recommendations create a universal statewide youth diversion policy and training curriculum all aimed at benefitting at-risk youth.

Christina Ghio, Esq., CWLS, Acting Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate: She supports this legislation because it brings young people to the table when it comes to policy affecting them; this can reshape the system to be more juvenile-friendly and mandates a data-driven approach when it comes to measuring the efficacy of these policies. All of this can address the epidemic of mental trauma in the most at-risk youth.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Agata Raszczyk, Connecticut Legal Services

Maria Morelli-Wolfe, Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Sarah Parker McKernan, New Haven Legal Assistance Association

The above coalition supports this legislation because these recommendations will help to ensure the developing network of diversion and school attendance efforts continues to improve. It will also ensure the voice of youth will be involved in the policymaking process by filling vacant JJPOC seats with young people.

Dr. Emily Knox, Research and Policy Director, Connecticut Voices for Children: Dr.

Knox supports this legislation because the modification of membership of the JJPOC and reporting structures creates a statewide uniform youth diversion policy. These changes can enable the state to continue meaningful reform of the criminal justice system.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU CT: Jess Zaccagnino supports this legislation because it signifies an investment in helping kids thrive and seeks to address a wide range of issues like diversion, education and re-entry that young people at risk, or already involved in the criminal justice system, face in this state. It is the position of the ACLU-CT that when children have access to high quality and early education, kids and families thrive; it is additionally worth noting that children and families of color tend to face this issue most commonly.

Jill Bourbeau, YSB Director, TEEG: Jill Bourbeau supports this legislation because it acts as a check on the power of those in charge of our youth. She believes consistency among the justice system is imperative.

Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation: Chris Senecal supports this legislation because philanthropy organizations can only do so much; they believe that the state must lead the way in supporting the justice system-involved youth and their families and diverting young people from incarceration. They furthered that the work

done is necessary in supporting and reforming the youth criminal justice system; it provides specialized treatment to youth and creates pathways to reunions with family.

Amber Kelly, Professor of Social Work, Quinnipiac University: Amber Kelly supports this legislation because she has seen the impact of evidence-based, community driven strategies for youth diversion, education, and reentry and believes this bill to be a reflection on the state's commitment to building a more collaborative, fair, equitable justice system for at-risk youth.

Erin Williamson LCSW, Chief Programs and Strategy Officer, Love146: Erin Williamson supports this legislation because the youth, who these policies mostly impact, must be part of the policymaking process since they are the target of this legislation. They believe the youth must be empowered to advocate for themselves when it comes to policy regarding them.

Thomas Nuccio, Childrens Policy Analyst, Rosemary Lopez, Women's Policy Analyst, Denise Drummond, African American Policy Analyst, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity:
The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity supports this legislation because it will provide support to at-risk youth by taking a data-driven approach at countering chronic absenteeism which can measure the efficacy of these policies.

Martha Stone, Center for Childrens' Advocacy: Martha Stone supports this legislation because her organization has witnessed the benefits of the juvenile review boards as they play a major role in reducing inequality in the legal system. She also stated that the provision appointing persons under the age of 26 is important as it ensures the youth voice is involved in the legislative process.

Brittany LaMarr, Senior Project Manager, Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, Tow Youth Justice Institute: Brittany LaMarr supports this legislation because all the recommendations came from the JJPOC. As a member of the JJPOC, she has witnessed the evolution of data-driven approaches and how they improve the lives of children.

Andrew Zhebrak, Project Coordinator, Tow Youth Justice Institute: He supports this legislation because the Community Expertise Workgroup within the JJPOC brings impacted youth to the table with policy makers. The recommendations in the bill also address inequity among diversion practices, as well as addressing data reporting on the efficacy of the policies, which can be used to identify areas of strength and weakness that can reduce youth recidivism and prevent youths from unequal treatment by the justice system.

Doris Maldonado Mendez, Children in Placement: Doris Maldonado Mendez supports this legislation because the provisions represent a compassionate, effective, and equitable approach to juvenile justice reform. She believes the following factors must be considered: the impact of trauma on youth, developmentally appropriate interventions, comprehensive services, youth mentorship, and community-based alternatives.

Jordyn Wilson, Director of Community Engagement, Connecticut Justice Alliance:

Jordyn Wilson supports this legislation because it is vital to hear from the youth who will be most affected by these policies. This legislation is also vital in ensuring all diversionary programs across the state are standardized and report data that proves the programs' success.

Michelle Stella Rose Dugue, Speak Up Coordinator, Center for Children's Advocacy:

She supports this legislation because it is critical to support the most vulnerable children/youth in the state. She explained that the at-risk youth know what their community needs best to be supported, and therefore they must have a seat at the table. This can help break the cycle that leads to recidivism among youth.

Erica Bromley, Youth Justice Consultant, Connecticut Youth Services Association:

Erica Bromley supports this legislation because prioritizing diversions is an essential step in keeping juveniles out of the corrections system and that a data-driven approach is necessary for determining the efficacy of these provisions. As the diversion process evolves, the support and resources provided to the communities doing the work must move forward as well.

Oluwaseyi Oluborode: She supports this legislation because of the provisions that add two youth voting seats on the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. She believes this will lead to more representative government and values young people who are most impacted by this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Griffin Olshan

Date: April 15, 2025