

# Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7255

AN ACT CONCERNING JUDICIAL BRANCH OPERATIONS AND

**Title:** PROCEDURES AND THE DUTIES OF JUDICIAL BRANCH PERSONNEL.

**Vote Date:** 4/4/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/31/2025

**File No.:** 773

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## SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

## REASONS FOR BILL:

This is the annual Judicial Branch bill regarding court operations designed to streamline and simplify processes, resolve small drafting errors, keep up with technology, and enhance access to justice.

## SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language makes various revisions throughout the bill, beginning with changes to Sec. 1 at the request of the Judicial Branch regarding the process for removing personal information from the electronic version of land records. There are technical changes to Sec. 2 (fixing incorrect numbering of subdivisions) and Sec. 16 (adding additional bracketing). In Sec. 24, the Connecticut Sentencing Commission is now required to complete a habeas study instead of the Judicial Branch. Finally, there's a wording change in subdivision (4) of Sec. 29 based on feedback from the public hearing.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**William Tong, Attorney General, Judicial Branch:** Attorney General Tong supports this legislation because many state officials have been the target of false liens designed to harass and intimidate them from fulfilling their obligations to the state. The proposals in this bill would reduce the amount of resources the State must expend litigating these matters, as well as protecting state employees from falling victim to these types of harassment.

**Hon. Elizabeth Bozzuto, Chief Court Administrator:** Judge Bozzuto and the judicial branch support this legislation because it is designed to streamline and simplify court processes, enhance access to justice, keep up with technology and resolve small statutory drafting errors.

**Jodi Hill-Lilly, Commissioner, CT Department of Children and Families:** Commissioner Hill-Lilly supports this legislation because current statute can impede coordinated service delivery and assessment of safety and service needs. The elimination of the statutes proposed in this bill would eliminate barriers to enable more information to be available when determining the disposition of these cases and how to best serve children.

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

**Barbara Fair (LCSW), Stop Solitary CT:** Barbara Fair is in support of this legislation because she and her organization support all laws relating to criminal justice procedural reform. It is her belief that the laws in this state do not apply equally to people of color and that this proposed legislation can fill in some of those gaps.

**DeAndre Brown, Executive Director and Affiliate, Evolve Love and BLM860:** DeAndre Brown supports this legislation because, as a former inmate at a CT state correctional facility who struggles with mental health disorders, he is in strong favor of all prison/criminal justice reform laws.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**State Marshal Association of CT:** The State Marshal Association of CT feel this legislation could cause delay and excess travel for those needing restraining and civil protection orders in the affected towns. Additionally, an increase in restraining orders issued by the Litchfield Judicial District for persons residing in the towns of Avon, Burlington, Canton, Farmington, Granby, and Simsbury will cause an operational issue for the Litchfield County State Marshals.

**Amanda Wallwin, State Policy Advocate, The Innocence Project:** Amanda Wallwin opposes subsection two of section 24 of this legislation because they are concerned that a statutory limit on petitions before they are seen by a judge would have the effect of barring innocent people from being able to have their meritorious claims heard on procedural grounds. They are opposed to subsection three of section 24 because differentiating between credible claims and meritless claims is the job of a judge.

**Charles Houlihan, Esq.:** Attorney Charles Houlihan opposes this legislation because the changes proposed would significantly disrupt his practice. It would cost his clients more due to travel times as he bills hourly, and that could harm his business.

**Stacey Yarborough, CT Town Clerks Association:** The CT Town Clerks Association opposes section one of this legislation because it would require municipal clerks to redact information contained within the land records, without a clear indication or study group as to the ramifications of the same, without a well-thought-out plan, as to form, procedure, substance and implementation.

**Michele Jacklin, Co-President, CT Council on FOI:** Michele Jacklin opposes section one of this legislation because it would create an Office of Information Privacy in the Judicial Department which conflicts with other provisions in statute that require the posting of some of the information that is included in this bill. This could enable public agencies to remove certain information from their websites that should be public under the Freedom of Information Act.

**Colleen Murphy, Executive Director, FOI Commission:** Colleen Murphy opposes section one of this legislation because the proposed Office of Information Privacy would empower the Judicial Branch and other public agencies to remove certain data protected under the FOIA from the internet. This would lead to public agencies posting as little information as possible online.

**Peter Smith, Milford Town Clerk, CT Town Clerks Association:** Peter Smith opposes section one of this legislation because the language presents significant logistical and legal challenges that could compromise the integrity of public records and hinder essential real estate transactions. Their key concerns revolve around volume of data, accuracy and consistency, balancing privacy with accessibility, technical limitations, legal and regulatory challenges, resource constraints and the impact on real estate and legal transactions.

**Reported by:** Griffin Olshan

**Date:** April 7, 2025