

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1218

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING WATER SAFETY AND SWIM INSTRUCTION.

Vote Date: 2/18/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/6/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st District.

Rep. Rebecca Martinez, 22nd District.

Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th District.

Rep. Craig C. Fishbein, 90th District.

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd District.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would establish a program to provide swim lessons to children ages 17 and under that live in a qualified census tract, those who are eligible for the supplemental nutrition assistance program or are eligible for the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children. These lessons are to be offered annually in the summer months and must be free of charge for those who are eligible.

Swim lessons would improve water safety for the children eligible for this program. This program aims to offer swim lessons as well as teach water safety skills to children to prevent water-related accidents.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Office of the Child Advocate Acting Child Advocate, Christina Ghio](#) supports this bill because swimming is a critical life skill. Swim lessons are not yet accessible to everyone, but this bill

would change that. They recommend adding swim competency training so that these children can also learn about water hazards and CPR.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Representative Aundre Bumgardner](#) supports this bill because it can help increase the risk of drowning. They have already seen improvements in the towns they represent since programs to provide lessons were introduced two years ago. There is proof that swim lessons are effective in reducing the risk of drowning.

[Central Connecticut Coast YMCA President and CEO, Timothy Bartlett](#) supports this bill because the YMCA has been able to provide many free swim lessons in the past due to programs like this. Drowning is the leading cause of accidental death in children ages 1-4. This program can help prevent that.

[Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs Vice President of Government Relations, John L. Cattelan](#) supports this bill because children in low-income houses are more likely to be unable to swim. The YMCA values being able to provide swimming lessons and preventing drowning accidents.

[Wallingford Family YMCA Executive Director, Sean Doherty](#) supports this bill because drowning is a prevalent cause of death in young children, and the YMCA appreciates the opportunity to provide swimming lessons to prevent that.

[Central Connecticut Coast YMCA Executive Director, Matthew LaPrino](#) supports this bill because drowning is a major problem for young children, and the YMCA has been grateful for the opportunity to provide swim lessons to underserved communities.

[Connecticut American Academy of Pediatrics Chapter Advocacy Chair, Molly Markowitz](#) supports this bill because drowning is a leading cause of death for children aged 1-4 and affects poor children and children of color at higher rates. This bill would help ensure that those kids have access to swim lessons.

[Greater Waterbury YMCA CEO, Jim O'Rourke](#) supports this bill because drowning is a leading cause of death for young children, and the YMCA has been grateful to be able to provide swim lessons to disadvantaged youth in the past.

[Northern Middlesex YMCA of Middletown CEO Michele Rulnik](#) supports this bill because the ability to swim is important and has helped many families in their community. One parent said that these swim lessons helped their son with social and emotional skills, while another parent can worry less when their special needs child is around a pool.

[Connecticut Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs CEO, Don Maletto](#) supports this bill because a lot of the children involved with the Boys and Girls Club have benefitted from programs like this. Over 70% of kids served by the Boys and Girls Club would qualify for this program, and they need to learn to swim to prevent a risk of drowning.

[Wallingford Family YMCA Senior Director of Aquatics and Community Development, Megan O'Connor](#) supports this bill because the YMCA has been able to help many children through similar programs, and it has had a positive impact on the community.

[Ocean Community YMCA Executive Director, Yolla El Khoury](#) supports this bill because it helps prevent the danger of drowning by providing swim lessons for children who would not ordinarily have access to swim lessons.

[Dr. Stephanie Gidicsin](#) supports this bill because they have seen firsthand the devastating effects that drowning can have on a family. People of color are less likely to have ever taken a swimming lesson than white adults, and this bill will help create more equitable opportunities for swim lessons.

[Naik Family YMCA Board President, Judy Munro](#) supports this bill because swim lessons can prevent the risk of drowning, which is particularly a problem in Connecticut's large cities.

[Reyna Ramos](#) supports this bill.

[YMCA Volunteer, Thomas Sanford](#) supports this bill because young people need to learn to swim, not only for their personal enjoyment, but also for their own safety.

[Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association Executive Director, Valerie Stolfi Collins](#) supports this bill because swim lessons are the most effective way to combat drowning. They recommend language be added to ensure that municipalities can add these lessons to existing programs instead of needing to outsource to a nonprofit middleman.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Julia Cabral

Date: 02/20/2025