

Government Oversight Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1296

AN ACT CONCERNING STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS UNDER

Title: THE STATE CODE OF ETHICS FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

Vote Date: 2/25/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/18/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Oversight Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill will require members of boards, commissions, committees, or councils within the Executive Department who have the authority to enter into or approve large state construction or procurement contracts, to file an annual statement of financial interests with the Office of State Ethics. Additionally, this bill adds tax-sheltered annuity retirement plans to the list of securities that are not required to be disclosed in any statements of financial interest. Only the type of plan is required to be submitted, but not the name of the security.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Peter Lewandowski, Office of State Ethics Executive Director:

Supports this bill because it provides updates regarding filing requirements and disclosures to the Statement of Financial Interests under the Code of Ethics for Public Officials and State Employees and thus creates greater public transparency in such filing.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Christina Captain, CT CannaWarriors, Co-Founder:

Supports this bill because it increases transparency, accountability, and ethical oversight of state agencies within the Department of Consumer Protection's (DCP) Medical Cannabis Program and prevents undue industry influence.

Josiah Schlee, CT CannaWarriors, Medical Cannabis Advocate:

Supports this bill's passage but has a desire for the report timeline for some to be sooner than 2027. In addition, qualms about certain issues about transparency are brought to the fore, specifically surrounding Analytics Labs lawsuit and DCP's major changes to cannabis law in the state.

Olivia Rinkes:

Supports this bill because it strengthens protections against conflicts of interest and improves transparency. Along with this, the bill will also prevent government misuse by reducing the ability of public servants and those around them to influence public policy through conflicts of interest or undue influence. Ms. Rinkes also urges legislators to pass this swiftly to prevent the influence of corporate cannabis interests on the Department of Consumer Protection in the formation of legislation that would negatively impact the medical cannabis industry.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Francis Pickering, Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WESTCOG)

Executive Director:

Mr. Pickering feels that the committee should consider expanding the scope of these bills to address emerging challenges, including, extending provisions to address relationships with federal officials including appointees and "special government employees". Mr. Pickering has several suggestions for concepts the committee could explore, including various conflict of interest and government ethics reforms, regulation of government technology and cybersecurity, enhanced data protections, election and campaign finance reforms, and crackdown on market manipulation and business abuses.

Reported by: : Tom Atwood

Date: 3/6/2025