

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1506

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING RACIAL AND ETHNIC IMPACT STATEMENTS.

Vote Date: 4/8/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/17/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

In 2018, the Connecticut General Assembly passed SB 256 (PA 18-78), which required that a racial and ethnic impact statement (REIS) be prepared at the request of any legislator to study the impact that a bill and/or amendment may have on a particular racial and/or ethnic group. Currently, SB 1506 goes a step further and aims to set protocols and deadlines for producing an impact statement through the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health to present to the leadership of the Connecticut House and Senate. It also makes clear that the Commission may request records from any public agency and/or quasi-public agency to obtain more information for purposes of preparing the impact statement.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The substitute language restores the ten-day timeline for requests, as well as language regarding amendments to bills. It also adds new language regarding electronic posting on the Connecticut General Assembly's website.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Manisha Juthani, Commissioner, Department of Public Health (DPH): While they appreciate the intent of this legislation, DPH opposes this bill because it enables access to identifiable personal and health information. As written, they claim that the bill has the potential to harm vulnerable populations through the disclosure of their protected health information. They also say the timeframe of five calendar days would be difficult to fulfill, especially if the request was received after business hours on a Friday, for example.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Muna Abbas, Associate Commission Analyst, Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH): CREPH supports this bill because it makes positive changes to previous legislation (PA 18-78), and it will facilitate the implementation of racial and ethnic impact statements within the legislative process in the Connecticut General Assembly.

Katie Daley, Community Engagement Manager, Health Equity Solutions: Katie Daley supports this bill because she agrees that additional clarification and structural support are needed to effectively implement REIS into our legislative processes, and such features were not implemented with the previous legislation that passed in 2018. Home Equity Solutions feels that this bill helps address some of those past concerns. They appreciate the timeframe clarification for requesting REIS, the structured process for developing REIS procedures by requiring the CREPH to work with all four legislative caucuses, and lastly, they appreciate that the bill works to emphasize the importance of access to timely and comprehensive information. They see the bill as an important step for achieving racial equity.

Liz Diehl, Associate Director, Connecticut Citizens Action Group (CCAG): CCAG supports this bill because they believe that timely and complete information about racial and socioeconomic disparities in healthcare is needed to identify issues and implement solutions. They support the modifications suggested by the Commission on Racial Equity and Public Health in their testimony.

Ed Hawthorne, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO: AFL-CIO supports this bill because they feel the bill will help address income inequality in our underserved communities by providing specific processes for the implementation of REIS that were not established via previous legislation from 2018.

Tanja Low, Law Clerk, Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH): While Connecticut has been ahead of other states regarding legislation surrounding REIS, Tanja Low supports this bill because a lack of clarity in the processes since 2018 has proven to limit the use and effectiveness of REIS in practice. They say that this bill ensures that REIS are completed in a timely manner to assist state legislators and policymakers. They also say the bill's proposed outline of formally establishing the rules around the creation of REIS is crucial for ensuring consistency, transparency, and accountability.

Werner Oyanadel, Policy Director, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO): CWCSEO supports this bill because they feel it will streamline the implementation of REIS, which will help identify and address racial disparities in legislation before it becomes state law. They feel that requiring REIS for certain bills starting in 2027, shortening the request period for REIS from ten to two days after a vote, shifting the responsibility for developing REIS procedures from the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee to the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH), and establishing formal procedures for how legislators can request REIS and how they will be developed, are all important and strong positive changes to current processes.

Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy Officer, The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving: The Hartford Foundation supports the intent of this bill because they see it as a meaningful step towards equitable policymaking in the state, ensuring that all residents, especially in

underserved communities, have a chance to thrive. They specifically support the provision allowing agencies to request an extension to the five-day response deadline, but in general, they appreciate the proposed language to require that state agencies, offices, and institutions provide the Commission with access to information within five days of a request. They also recommend examining the prospect of adding additional state agency staff and training that the Commission may need in order to conduct REIS work. They also support the proposal to involve all four legislative caucuses in the process to ensure new procedures are utilized in a bipartisan fashion.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Mark Riddle: Submitted testimony in opposition to this bill.

Reported by: Alex Sferrazza

Date: April 17, 2025

