

Government Oversight Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5476 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF EFFORTS TO PREVENT HUMAN
Title: TRAFFICKING.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep Dathan, Rep Collins Main, Sen Sampson

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill establishes a framework to strengthen Connecticut's response to human trafficking by creating a Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinator within OPM to lead interagency coordination, develop specialized training, align efforts with the Trafficking in Persons Council, and maintain a statewide directory of victim services, while also requiring annual legislative reporting. The bill mandates trafficking focused training across multiple agencies, including DCF and the Judicial Branch, enhances protections for children by requiring DCF to assess security at out-of-home placements and report findings, and expands oversight by the Child Advocate on specialized and residential placements. It also creates a temporary statewide task force to implement prior recommendations on trafficking response, and strengthens DCF's responsibilities by making multidisciplinary team coordination, service provision, and support for trafficked or at-risk children mandatory rather than optional, including required training for law enforcement.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

I.19 adds word "assistance", requiring state agencies to provide assistance as well as data to the coordinator

Sec. 4-allows DCF to use existing training program developed for law enforcement, hospitals etc. rather than needing to develop a new training for DCF employees and providers.

Sec. 7-deleted reference to the report being provided to JJPOC (former Subdiv. 13)

Sec. 10-keeps first line discretionary rather than mandatory about DCF providing services to children who are trafficking victims.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Tina Jefferson: Deputy Commissioner, Department of Children and Families:

Deputy Commissioner Jefferson supports the intent of this bill with opposition to specific sections such as Sections 3, 4, and 10 which are duplicative to existing statutory mandates and practice. Section 6 contains a provision is extremely broad and captures not only congregate care settings, but all foster and kinship homes as well. Section 7 details a requirement involving reporting to the juvenile justice system while most children in DCF care are not involved in this system. She also states that Section 10 of this bill would further traumatize families by requiring DCF to maintain open child protection cases on them and would result in the need for significantly more staffing at DCF, which is not accounted for in the Governor's budget.

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of The State:

Secretary Thomas strongly supports this proposal and states that if enacted, HB 5476 would allow her office to contribute to the Council's work at a time when the private sector is increasingly recognized as an important partner in identifying and preventing trafficking.

Christina Ghio, Acting Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate:

The OCA supports this bill improve state systems to prevent human trafficking, particularly Section 4 which would require DCF to provide training to all employees and contract providers regarding trafficking in minor children. The OCA also supports Sections 6 requesting further clarification about specific care settings, 7, 8, and 10(a) with specific requests regarding DCF reporting.

Sharmese Walcott: States Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice:

Ms. Walcott supports Sections 1 and 8 of H.B. 5476, and recommend the Committee take favorable action.

Renee Cimino, Chief Public Defender, Division of Public Defender Services:

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports this bill but requests that in Section 8 OCPD be included as a member of the Human Trafficking Prevention and Response Task Force.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Emmy Franklin, Public Policy and Advocacy Associate, Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance:

The Alliance supports the intent of this bill with some suggestions for the language of the bill. The Alliance supports the goal of expanding human trafficking awareness and training among staff working with vulnerable youth, with request that state required training remains engaging, relevant, and evidence based. The Alliance also asks that the bill outlines which staff are covered by the training requirement.

Megan Griffin, Public Policy Advocacy Manager, National Center on Sexual

Exploitation: The National Center on Sexual Exploitation supports the intent of this legislation and the creation of a role that would bring greater coordination to Connecticut's anti-trafficking response, but they feel that this bill fails to establish a position that would adequately address existing gaps. The existing gaps includes the bill largely neglects continuums of care for adult survivors of sex trafficking by limiting the provision of services through the Department of Children and Families to minor children.

Mary Lee Keenan, President and CEO Greenwich YWCA:

YWCA Greenwich is in support of this bill in relation our mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

Krystal Rich: Executive Director, Connecticut Children's Alliance:

Ms. Rich supports the intention of this bill and offer comments on Sections 1, 8, 9, and 10 of this bill. She states that Section 1 is duplicative and in Section 9 she suggests the language more explicitly recognizes the role of Child Advocacy Centers within the multidisciplinary response. In Section 10 she requests that rather than adding additional requirements to DCF, a more effective and efficient approach would be to better resource the systems already responding to these cases and expand specialized community-based services.

Erin Williamson, Chief Programs Officer, Love 146 End Child Trafficking and

Exploitation: Ms. Williamson strongly supports this bill which recognizes the critical need to improve our state's efforts to prevent trafficking and support those who experienced this form of victimization.

Megan Baker, Lead AAPI Policy Analyst, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity:

The CWCSEO supports H.B. 5476 and appreciates the leadership of the Government Oversight Committee for raising this bill, as it sends a strong message that the state is committed to prioritizing the safety and dignity of every child and individual at risk of exploitation.

Sarah Eagan: Executive Director, Center for Children's Advocacy:

The Center for Children's Advocacy supports this bill and appreciates the committee's attention to the challenging and tragic problem of child trafficking in Connecticut.

Beth Hamilton: Executive Director, Alliance to End Sexual Violence:

Ms. Hamilton supports this bill and the institutionalization of a Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinator position within the Office of Policy and Management will increase access to resources and data that are critical to the response to and prevention of human trafficking statewide.

Jamie Manirakiza: Executive Director, Partnership to End Human Trafficking:

Jamie Manirakiza provides general support for this bill with some requests of the committee. First, the bill would benefit from more clearly addressing labor trafficking alongside sex trafficking. Second, it is important that the coordinator's work fully address the needs of both youth and adult survivors. Given the scope of the work described in the bill, consideration should be given to ensure that the task force is representative of the network of

statewide providers, that work with both adults and youth, addressing both sex and labor trafficking.

Becca Zipkin, Policy Director, World Without Exploitation:

Ms. Zipkin expresses general support for this bill, but believes that as currently drafted, the bill does not adequately reflect the full continuum of care and does not sufficiently address labor trafficking, both of which are critical components of a comprehensive statewide response to human trafficking. She also believes that it is vital that a task force of this nature include representation that reflects all victims across the state.

Taylor Tantaquidgeon, Student:

Taylor Tantaquidgeon expresses general support for this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Deborah Joyner: CT Chair, New Englanders Against Sexual Exploitation:

Ms. Joyner opposes this because the bill text describes a highly bureaucratic response engaging with multiple existing state agencies and non-profits that are already involved, mainly in preventing child sex trafficking. She also opposes this bill because the language in the bill repeatedly reflects the bias of existing actors, who see this mainly as a crime impacting children and youth.

**Reported by: Clerk- Greg Wolff
Assistant Clerk- Mike Hamann**

Date: 3/23/26