

Public Safety and Security Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-371 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE REQUIREMENT FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF TWELVE WHILE ON PUBLIC DOCKS,

Title: WHARVES AND PIERS.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/5/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill was raised in order to better address children's safety concerns while on any dock, wharf, or pier. The bill would therefore require any child under the age of 12 to wear a personal flotation device to help mitigate risks related to drowning and help keep children safe as they enjoy outdoor activities near a body of water.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, DEEP](#): Commissioner Dykes offered testimony in support of the bill, claiming that the bill will promote water safety for children. However, she is concerned that the bill does not account for recreational fishing at public piers which are already designed and constructed with safety railings. She also notes that public fishing piers provide quality fishing opportunities for families and youth. She also states that if the bill is to move forwards the age limit should align with federal law to avoid confusion. She explains that federal law (33 CFR 175.15) requires children under age thirteen to wear a personal flotation device.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Joseph Gresko, Deputy House Speaker, State of Connecticut: Representative Gresko is in support of the bill. He explains that in August of 2025 a six-year-old boy fell off a dock and drowned due to the strong currents. He states this could have been avoided if this bill had been imposed earlier. Representative Gresko also added that states like Maine have a similar program and the life preservers are donated from boaters. He addresses the concerns that municipalities would be held liable, however he believes that parents would be held liable first.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Mike Muszynski, CCM: Mr. Muszynski offered testimony in opposition of the bill. He states that the bill requires a child under the age of 12 to wear a flotation device while on any public dock, wharf or pier. However, he explains that this lacks clarity because language fails to define what is considered a dock, wharf, or pier. He adds that the lack of clarity extends to educational and recreational structures that are important to municipal programming. He also is concerned that the bill presents substantial enforcement and liability challenges for towns and cities as docks are not monitored 24/7. He believes that the bill creates requirements that force families to purchase PFDs to access these spaces which will limit children's access to the outdoors which is important to their physical and mental health.

Valerie Stolfi Collins, Executive Director, CRPA: testified in opposition to the bill. While she supports the intention of the bill, she feels that it lacks clarity as to what is considered a dock, wharf, and pier. She also expressed her concerns about whether a municipality would have to enforce this, if a municipality would have to provide the PFDs, when PFDs are required, and would children always have to wear a PFD. She explains that there should be a balance between safety and outdoor access. She also adds that increasing access to swimming lessons would save more children's lives.

Reported by: Emma Rybacki, Clerk
Olivia Buczak, Assist. Clerk

Date: 3/26/26