

## Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-408 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING LIQUOR PERMITS, FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION INSPECTIONS, THE REGISTRATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION AND

**Title:** VARIOUS REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO JUICE BARS.

**Vote Date:** 3/17/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/12/2026

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill was raised in response to a significant outcry from the community, as noted in the testimony, following a series of violent instances involving people aged 18-20. This bill expands the authority of towns and municipalities to set regulations for establishments known as "juice bars." Specifically, it would allow a town or municipality to set the hours in which a juice bar can operate (so long as they do not operate after 10 PM) to the extent of prohibiting the existence of and/or prohibiting the sale of alcohol at a juice bar. This bill also alters the liquor permit application process to include more detailed information, like that of a detailed description of the type of live entertainment to be provided and certification that a local or deputy fire marshal, fire inspector inspects the premises in which alcohol is served. Also included in this legislation are modifications to inspections from the fire marshal, adjusting the inspection cycle from once a year to every other year, helping to stem issues in major cities who have larger populations and therefore require more inspections. This bill would also place increased restrictions and penalties on juice bars and certain requirements on other cafe permittees. These provisions intend to curb an uptick in violent incidents, examples of which are noted in the testimony from Mayor Justin Elicker of New Haven, where certain establishments with this type of licensing have histories of violence, where accessibility to alcoholic beverages are increased.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute language changes section 1 of the bill to allow a liquor license applicant to certify an inspection was done within one calendar year.

#### **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Bryan Cafferelli, Commissioner, Department of Consumer Protection:** Commissioner Cafferelli is in opposition of the bill. He states that Section 1 of the bill is concerned with the requirement that all on-premises liquor permits be annually inspected by local fire officials. He notes that before 2023, the Department collected fire marshal certificates for all on-premises liquor permit renewals which acted as gatekeepers of this local inspection obligation. In 2023 this requirement was removed, and the Department added an attestation to the renewal application requiring permittees to swear that the mandatory inspection occurred. He claims that if the Department was required to again engage in collecting the annual certificates, they would be forced to reallocate licensing and enforcement resources, which would result in slow processing and some areas labeled as less important. Mr. Cafferelli then states that Section 4(f)(2) of the bill requires permittees to alert the Liquor Control Commission of a conviction related to the juice bar statutes. He is concerned this will limit the Department's investigative powers and penalty options. He then offers a revision to the bill in line 264.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Walter Summers, Co-Legislative Rep, CT Fire Marshals Assoc.:** Mr. Summers is in support of the bill specifically section one because it removes the exemption of the fire marshal inspection and approval for liquor license renewal. He states that this will make a liquor license owner get a fire marshal's approval before a renewal is granted and it will increase the number of inspections, and safety. However, he states that the CFMA is in opposition of section two because it changes the inspection schedule and who can conduct inspections. He states that this change makes no sense according to data from CFMA which shows residential properties are one of the top occupancies that have fatal fires. Finally, Mr. Summers expresses support of section 3 which is like bills in Housing and Planning and Development committees. He claims this information is important to emergency services.

**David DelVecchio, Director Real Estate Asset Management, Yale University Properties:** Mr. DelVecchio is in support of the bill. He believes the bill will provide municipalities and local authorities with additional tools to improve oversight of these operations by establishing clearer expectations for venues. He states that the impacts of the activities at juice bars are felt by everyone in the surrounding areas. He states that this legislation will create a safer environment.

**Scott Ferguson, Property Manager, The Liberty Building:** Mr. Ferguson is in support of the bill. He states that there are many issues regarding Juice Bars, the first being the large numbers of people. He states that this causes a lot of noise late into the night, large amounts of people trespassing on to other people's property, and this even occurs in downtown areas. His second issue is that it makes a mess out of neighborhoods, people leaving their trash on the sidewalks, bringing in unwanted animals, and vandalizing properties. And lastly, he states that this causes a large public safety issue. He states that there are many fights and shootings that break out and cause people to move out of these areas. He hopes this legislation will lead to Juice Bars no longer being permitted in Connecticut.

**Christine Kim, Alder, Ward 7 in the City of New Haven:** Ms. Kim is in support of the bill. She states that she is very aware of the Juice Bar Loophole which allows for the unlicensed alcohol service to minors and operation without required safety standards. She states that there are three of these establishments in Ward 7, each having hundreds of police complaints. She adds that these bring about several concerns surrounding gun violence, sexual assaults, destruction to neighborhoods, and a huge problem for public safety. She states that the downtown of New Haven is growing but Juice Bars hurt the progress. As a mother, she adds that she has become increasingly aware of public safety issues, and she worries what this means for her children.

**Michael Piscitelli, AICP, Economic Development Administrator:** Mr. Piscitelli is in support of the bill. He states that this bill is important to improving the state of downtown areas and preventing continued violence. He adds that it is not acceptable that residents in these areas need to deal with the behavior at Juice Bars. He states that section 4 of the bill provides legislation that will restore a sense of balance within the clubs by limiting the underage capacity to 10% of the total and by giving our Police Department the power to deny a juice bar permit to protect public safety.

**Vicente Siquenza, Owner:** Mr. Siquenza is in support of the bill. He believes 18+ bars bring unwanted behavior and violence. He adds that this causes people to avoid cities with these establishments.

**Allan Smith, Mayor, Town of Rocky Hill, Miriam Lifshitz-Theroux, Deputy Mayor, Town of Rocky Hill:** Mr. Smith is in support of the bill. He states that after the severe winter, Rocky Hill has spent several weeks managing a serious housing and life-safety crisis at the Concierge Apartments. He states they faced many issues with this, the main one being they had no way to contact people who controlled the property and that section 3 of the bill will help solve this issue. He adds that section 3 sets the threshold for twenty thousand; however, he requests this be changed to twenty-five thousand, to align with Senate Bill 274. Along with that, he requests that the requirement for non-resident owners and agents to register at least two phone numbers reachable around the clock for emergency response purposes be kept in the bill. However, he states that he does not support section 2 of the bill because it would extend the required inspection interval from one year to two. Mr. Smith believes this would have several unintended consequences.

**Jacqueline Campbell, Property Manager, Northside Development Company:** Ms. Campbell is in support of section 4 of the bill. She states that she has many concerns regarding juice bars in downtown New Haven. She says that she has multiple times seen underaged people getting alcohol and leaving these establishments intoxicated. She adds that patrons of these clubs attend at late hours, vandalize, and leave behind human waste which her team needs to clean up.

**Justin Elicker, Mayor, City of New Haven:** Mayor Elicker is in support of sections 2 and 4 of the bill. He states that section 2 proposes that fire inspections be completed once every two calendar years and allows “a sworn member or third party to conduct the inspections.” He states that inspections are time consuming, and there are already enough incentives to encourage property owners to keep up to date on regulations. Mayor Elicker then states that section 4 proposes a series of additions to the “juice bar” statute. He supports this because Juice Bars have a history of bad actors, violence, and allow minors to have easy access to liquor. He adds that within the past few months there have been 57 bar incidents reported by the PD at four establishments. He noted that most happened in the early morning or late at night. He offers some language that he would like to be added to the bill.

**Caroline Tanbee Smith, Alder, Ward 9 in the City of New Haven:** Ms. Smith is in support of the bill. She states that the current Juice Bar loophole allows establishments to operate in ways that propagate unsafe conditions. She says that downtown New Haven has seen many violent instances. She believes that this bill takes important steps towards addressing this issue with stronger guardrails

including curfews, wristbands requirements, advance notification to local police, and oversight of these events.

**Jerry M Rynich, Acting Fire Marshal, City of New Haven:** Mr. Rynich is in support of section 2 of the bill. He believes that because of the large number of people, the New Haven Fire Department serving biannual inspections are important. He states that many businesses work to meet current legislation standards. However, he states that he opposes allowing third parties to conduct fire inspections. He fears this could open up liability, hardships, and unnecessary costs on contractors. He adds he feels a third party may not be held to the same standards.

**Carmen Rodriguez, Alder, Ward 6 in the City of New Haven:** Ms. Rodriguez is in support of the bill. She states that under current law 18+ "Juice Bars" can operate without regulatory structures that apply to traditional liquor-licensed venues. She notes these establishments attract large crowds which have become a safety concern. She claims that the bill will bring accountability and oversight to these establishments. She adds that it is important for the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection to maintain the ability to investigate violations and impose penalties when businesses break the law.

**Mike Muszynski, CCM:** Mr. Muszynski is in support of the bill. He states that the liquor permits required in the bill will ensure that a fire marshal's inspection is a mandatory part of the liquor permit process. He claims this will ensure the safety of a business. He then states that changing to biennial fire inspections will take some burden off local fire marshals. However, he claims that language should be changed to limit this to properties with a proven record of safety. He states that this is important to ensure new business owners follow safety regulations. He adds that he would even support it if this was limited to properties, such as multifamily dwellings. In terms of third-party inspectors, he states that the CCM would be willing to work with local fire marshals, and the State Fire Marshal to ensure third parties have the proper training. Finally he states that he is in support of requiring non-resident landlords to provide 24-hour emergency contact information and identifying details for those with operational control, stating it will ensure municipalities have contracts to address code violations.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Terrence Dunn Jr., Fire Marshal:** Mr. Dunn is in opposition of the bill because it will change the fire inspection frequency from annual inspections to once every two-years. He states that annual fire inspections are essential safeguards to ensure that life-safety systems function correctly. Also, he notes, they are an important opportunity for fire officials to educate property owners and residents. He adds that when fire safety regulations are reduced there are devastating consequences.

**Dave Rutigliano, Representative, Connecticut General Assembly:** Representative Rutigliano is in opposition of the bill as it is currently written. He suggests a deletion of section 1. He states that the provision removing the requirement for a fire inspection for the renewal of a liquor permit was negotiated in good faith and passed on a bi-partisan basis. He adds that the municipal fire department is still authorized to inspect at any time they want, so there is no need to permit a renewal.

**Scott Dolch, President & CEO, Connecticut Restaurant & Hospitality Association:** Mr. Dolch is in opposition of the bill. He states that in 2023 the requirement for restaurants, upon renewing a liquor permit, to be inspected by a local fire marshal as a condition of that renewal was removed. He states that restaurants, hotels, and hospitality venues are committed to maintaining safe establishments and working cooperatively with local fire officials, however, he urges the committee to keep the current systems established in 2023.

## GENERAL COMMENTS:

[William H Dully, Resident of New Haven, CT:](#) Mr. Dully expresses his objection to the bill, he states that he would like to see stronger legislation. He talks about his personal experience with a juice bar in his neighborhood, Gotham City Café, which he describes as having repeated violence and murders.

He offers another testimony where he changes his position to be in support of the bill. He provides a detailed slide show regarding important information about juice bars.

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

**Date:** 3/27/26