

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

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CONNECTICUT
GEN. ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

PROCEEDINGS
1979

VOL. 22

PART 26

8873-9225

House of Representatives

Monday, May 21, 1979

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through and including on page 5, Calendar 1306. I move for acceptance and passage of these Bills.

DEPUTY SPEAKER COATSWORTH:

You have heard the motion, all those in favor of the motion please indicate by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER COATSWORTH:

Opposed, no. The ayes have it, the Consent Calendar is passed.

Substitute for House Bill No. 7426. AN ACT CONCERNING CONSTRUCTION OF BUS SHELTERS. Favorable Report of the Committee on Appropriations.

Substitute for House Bill No. 5550. AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR DEAF-BLIND PERSONS. Favorable Report of the Committee on Appropriations.

House Bill No. 7903. AN ACT CONCERNING INDUSTRIAL LOANS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION PROJECTS.

Favorable Report of the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

Substitute for House Bill No. 7166. AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT RIVER ASSEMBLY. Favorable Report of the Committee on Appropriations.

Substitute for House Bill No. 7919. AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AND ATTAIN ENERGY PERFORMANCE GOALS IN STATE BUILDINGS.

Favorable Report of the Committee on Appropriations.

Substitute for House Bill No. 7662. AN ACT CONCERNING THE TOLLS AND CONCESSIONS ACCOUNT.

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CONNECTICUT
GEN. ASSEMBLY
SENATE

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THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Matthews.

SENATOR MATTHEWS:

Mr. President, I also join and do ask for full support of the bill. I have a number of people in my community who are paraplegics and who are depending upon this bill to help them as I'm sure many others in this State are because of their inability to keep finances up and keep their care in the State which they need when they're doing their work at home. Very wonderful bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Hearing no objection, it may be placed on the consent calendar.

THE ASST. CLERK:

Calendar No. 1161, Substitute for House Bill No. 5550, File No. 1003. An Act Concerning Special Training Programs For Deaf-Blind Persons.

SENATOR O'LEARY:

Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator O'Leary.

SENATOR O'LEARY:

Mr. President, I move acceptance and passage of the joint committee's favorable report.

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THE CHAIR:

Would you remark?

SENATOR O'LEARY:

This bill will enable the Board of Education and Services for the Blind to spend up to \$10,000.00 per person per fiscal year for persons over 21 years of age and over who are blind or or visually impaired and deaf to send to a special training facility. The bill will cost approximately \$36,000.00 which is ear-marked in the FAC acts without appropriations. If there is no objection, I would move the item to today's consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Ruggiero.

SENATOR RUGGIERO:

Mr. President, I obviously have no objection, I just wish to rise and speak in favor of the bill. I happen to be one of the sponsors of the bill, back in January. I think it's a program that's needed in the State of Connecticut. There are very few people in the State, I believe the total number is 50 people that would be able to avail themselves of this project. They received their particular disabilities as a result of the rubella outbreak in the early fifties and I concur with Senator O'Leary that it should be placed on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Hearing no objection, so ordered.

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bill concerning Manchester Community College under emergency certification. I didn't hear it. It's not on the calendar, but it is on the consent calendar and it should be read in.

THE CHAIR:

You're absolutely right, Senator Barry. This is a matter that was not printed in the calendar. It was given emergency certification. The Clerk will please announce that one also.

THE ASST. CLERK:

The Clerk will announce, let's see, Senate Bill No. 1685. It's a committee bill, LCO No. 8528.

THE CHAIR:

That is also on the consent calendar. Any errors or omissions? Are we ready to vote? Machine is open. Please record your vote.

SENATOR LIEBERMAN: SB 1123, HB 5556, HB 5701, HB 6484, HB 6540, HB 6818, HB 7548, HB 7695, HB 6816, HB 7490, HB 7855, HB 5739, HB 6710, HB 7673, HB 7718, HB 7806, HB 7014, HB 5107, HB 7032, HB 5399, HB 5550, Mr. President. HB 6256, HB 6258, HB 7166, HB 7426, HB 7662, HB 7766, HB 7919, HB 5297, HB 7233, HB 7240, HB 7246, HB 7442, HB 7497, HB 7903, THE CHAIR: HB 7976, HB 6270, HB 6259, HB 6553, HB 7747, HB 7748, HB 5843.

Machine may be closed. Clerk please tally the vote. Result of the vote, 36 yea, 0 nay. The consent calendar is adopted.

Senator Lieberman. HB 7889, HB 7951, SB 382, SB 595, SB 803, SB 303, SB 1533, SENATOR LIEBERMAN: SB 1536, SB 1314, SB 547, SB 1685

Move for suspension of the rules to allow for immediate transmittal to the House of those items that should go to the House.

THE CHAIR:

Hearing no objection, so ordered.

**JOINT
STANDING
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EDUCATION

March 2, 1979

MR. PATTON (Continued): and Services to the Blind, and I'm here today to testify officially on behalf of the Board of Directors of the agency in support of bill 5550 concerning special training programs for deaf blind persons.

As I'm sure most of you are aware, in the 1960's there was a national rubella epidemic. This resulted nationally in 30,000 children with serious birth defects and in the state of Connecticut, we presently have 60 children from this epidemic who are classified as deaf blind. These 60 are currently receiving special education services mostly at the Oakhill School for the Blind in Hartford; some at the Southbury Training School; a very few at Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts.

At age 21, the special education funding for these children stops. Practically all of these youngsters can benefit by continued training. Practically all will require lifelong supportive services. Because of the multiplicity of handicapping conditions involved and in many cases it's more than just deafness and blindness, there are a number of agencies, programs and interested parties involved in planning and there has been an active planning committee for the last ten years. I presently chair this committee, and some of the programs involved are of course, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, the State Commission for the Deaf and Visually -- and Deaf and Hearing Impaired, the Department of Mental Retardation and its facilities, the New England Regional Center for Deaf Blind Persons, the federal coordinating group, the American Foundation for the Blind, the Helen Keller National Center for Blind Adults and Children, and parent representatives.

In 1977, the legislature passed Special Act 77-81, and this -- the bill originated and was favorably reported from this committee and it supplied funds for a study on the needs of these 60 deaf blind children after they reached the age of 21, and I have recently sent copies of this study to each member of the Education Committee.

Essentially, the study recommends the development of new community residence facilities and programs for these children after the age of 21. Bill 5550 is a product of that study and of the planning committee. It gives one agency -- and it was felt that it was important that one agency should have this responsibility -- it was a consensus of the planning group that it should be the Board of Education and Services to the Blind. It gives one agency this responsibility. It includes a statutory definition of deaf blindness, and the

MR. PATTON (Continued): definition included is the federally recognized definition, and it authorizes funding to pay for residential training programs for these youngsters after age 21.

In terms of implementation, in the fiscal year 79-80, there will be aid to these youngsters who reach the age of 21. By 1985, there will 21. By 1992, all 60 will have reached 21.

Current planning is to develop basic new communities, residence facilities and programs at the Oakhill School for the Blind in Hartford, which is a state supported private institution. It's important to stress that without these new community residence facilities, most of these youngsters would require lifelong institutionalization. The current cost to the state for basic maintenance at a state institution is \$14,000. With additional special training, this figure can go to \$19,000 and more. The majority of the 60 deaf blind youngsters can benefit by a residential community training program at a cost to the state of \$10,000. There will be other private and federal funds that will supplement this planning. The projected cost for this bill in fiscal 80, will be \$31,500. I would recommend two technical corrections in the wording of the bill, and I have written testimony that I'll hand in.

In line 22, adding per client, before -- per fiscal year, and in line 24, adding public and private before specialized facilities. I would strongly urge your support of this very significant planning. I want to thank you for supporting the original study and for your advocacy for handicapped people. Thank you.

REP. BERTINUSON: Thank you Mr. Patton. Would you repeat those corrections that you made so that they are in the transcript?

MR. PATTON: Yes. In line 22 of the proposed bill, to add "per client" before "per fiscal year" -- to make it very clear what we're talking about; and in line 24, to add "public and private" before "specialized facilities" to give us as much flexibility in planning as possible. I'll be happy to respond to any questions.

REP. BERTINUSON: Thank you Mr. Patton. Before that, I would like to note that House Chairman of the Education, Representative Dorothy Goodwin, has joined and ranking member, Dorothy Osler, Representative Alice Meyer, and Representative Lawlor. I think I've found everybody now.

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REP. BERTINUSON: I have a couple of questions, Mr. Patton. Would you explain to the committee how the special education for these children is funded now before they reach the age of 21? Is it funded in the same way as it is for other special education children?

MR. PATTON: Well, it's funded in the same way as other special education programs for blind youngsters. We have -- we are the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, and a separate state department of education really for blind and visually impaired children. We have statutes that will -- that authorize up to \$6,400 per student per year for a student who is just legally blind, and up to \$12,000 per student per year for a multihandicapped blind student. The majority of our children are in public schools at an average cost much less than that.

REP. BERTINUSON: And the children who are in public schools -- are any of these children in public schools -- the deaf blind group of children?

MR. PATTON: No.

REP. BERTINUSON: No?

MR. PATTON: No.

REP. BERTINUSON: The children who are in public schools are paid for by their local boards of education or by the state board?

MR. PATTON: Well, we furnish and the statutes provide money for us to see that they get the kind of services they need in the way of special education. In some cases, this may be an itinerant teacher who is the staff of the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, that goes to the local community and provides and arranges for whatever necessary materials and consultation and special tutoring aids. In some cases, where there are enough children in a local public school system, the local -- the city, with our approval, would hire a teacher and we would reimburse for the total salary and related expenses.

In terms of a residential program, we would pay tuition directly.

REP. BERTINUSON: So that this group of deaf blind children now are currently the total responsibility of the state through the State Board of Education?

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MR. PATTON: That is correct.

REP. BERTINUSON: Thank you. Any questions from members?
Representative Pier.

REP. PIER: Representative Pier from the 15th. If I understand correctly Mr. Patton, this is a relatively, on 5550, a relatively discrete group right now. The group of about 60 is primarily a result of the German measles epidemic, wasn't it?

MR. PATTON: That is correct.

REP. PIER: Would -- given the fact that -- if my calculations are correct -- I think probably, there aren't very many at least of those 60 who are over about age 15 or 16 now, are there?

MR. PATTON: Most of them are in that age bracket.

REP. PIER: Would there be any objection on the department's -- on the part of the department were we to cap -- since we've got another 5 years of experience realistically in terms of determining what kinds of needs these children are going to have, what kind of resources are going to be available at other levels, and to eliminate some potential objection to what might look like an open-ended process; that if we were to cap this at let's say, age 25, recognizing that's going to get us another full 10 years of experience, hopefully a lot better data, comparative data from other states to be able to compare what our ongoing needs might be?

MR. PATTON: No, that would really be contrary to what we're recommending. What we're really recommending is long-term community residential placement that would include training services, but the alternative to the state is going to be long-term institutionalization at a higher cost. So, I think we would be opposed to capping it at age 25.

REP. PIER: Even recognizing that potential distinction might be made between educational service and for want of a better term, what we would call ultimately welfare or custodial care?

MR. PATTON: I'm not sure I understand your --

REP. PIER: Well, I am fully supportive of the attempt to bring these children out into the specialized facilities, public

REP. PIER (Continued): and private. My question is, is this appropriately effectively an educational expenditure or is it more appropriately for want of a better term -- I don't like the term, welfare, but I can't think of a better one at the moment -- custodial care, I guess would be the --

MR. PATTON: Well, yes, I think we are talking about -- well, more basic maintenance care plus building in a very needed factor of training, and let me give you an example. Most of these youngsters as we see it would eventually live in a community -- a group home kind of thing, and this is what we would be paying \$10,000 -- the state would be paying \$10,000 per client, as opposed to the current \$14,000 for just basic maintenance in an institution. In addition to this, however, the whole concept of the community residence is that these youngsters would be able during the day to get out to a sheltered workshop, to some kind of an activity during the day, to continue to receive physical therapy and these kinds of services. Does that relate at all to --

REP. PIER: I'm still having a little bit of a problem because while I'm fully supportive of the concept, what I'm really trying to head off is an objection to what might be considered basically, a totally open-ended proposition that we can't cap either in terms of experience or expenditures. It would seem to me -- not saying that's where we want to end up -- but if in the interim, we made this facility available up to -- for somebody as a support and as a training expenditure up to age 25, it effectively gives us -- from my perspective -- another 10 years to see both what our needs and our experience in this program -- not within our own state, because this problem isn't limited to the state of Connecticut but we have some experience we'd either be able to share with other states that have experienced the same kind of a problem and a similar kind of a situation --

MR. PATTON. Well, if the legislature chose to do that, we, of course, would have to live with it, but it would be contrary to everything we're planning, and in my opinion, it doesn't seem the best planning, because what I think we are proposing is along-term community residence kind of setting, as opposed to institutionalization, but we're offering more kinds of services, hopefully for a -- well, as we see it, for a price less for a cost to the state, less than basic institutionalization, and I do have some projections.

It would be -- if you need a cap on it, it might be more logical to talk about the numbers of students than an upper age limit, and I have some projections I'll be happy to share