

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

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Senate - 4685 - 4694 (10)

HOUSE: 7757 - 7796 (40)

Total - 50p

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Certified HB8007 An Act Concerning Expenditures for the Programs and Services of the Department of Public Health as amended by House Amendment Schedules "A", "C" and "D". The bill is accompanied by emergency certification and the Clerk is in possession of amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you, Madam President. I move acceptance of the Emergency Certified HB8007 and passage of the bill in concurrence with the House.

THE CHAIR:

The question is on passage in concurrence. Will you remark?

SEN. HARP:

Thank you, Madam President. This bill implements certain aspects of the budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Retardation, the Office of Policy and Management and the Department of Social Services.

For the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services the bill authorizes that department to operate trustee accounts for inpatient and outpatient

Department clients, under protocols established by the State Comptroller.

It eliminates references throughout the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services statutes to regional mental health directors.

It authorizes the Department to find activities through a contract or through a grant made within the appropriation for any fiscal year.

It authorizes the Department to establish medical reimbursements rates for behavioral health services, inpatient, outpatient, as well as residential services purchased by the Department.

It requires the Department to establish and operate a behavioral health managed care program for the general assistance recipients who are afflicted with behavioral health issues within available appropriations and beginning July 1, 1998, the Department must expand to include providing for basic needs to support that population as determined eligible by the Department of Social Services.

The bill opens the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services court liaison to people whose drug dependency is incident to current medical treatment by removing the prohibition by classifying such people as drug dependent.

It removes the Department of Correction approved programs to which the Office of Adult Probation can refer and replaces those programs with Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services operated or approved programs.

For the Department of Public Health, the bill expands the Department's authority concerning its childhood immunization program and allows them to accept private funds for that program.

It provides that laboratory services must be provided by the state laboratory for law enforcement agencies without charge, and specifies that state laboratory testing services are provided without charge to the chief medical examiner and police agencies.

It adds congenital adrenalhyperplasia to the protocol of tests that hospitals must administer to newborns and it adds newborn hearing screening to that protocol in 1999.

It directs the Department of Public Health to expend certain new appropriations to expand dental access at community health centers and school based health clinics and expands age groups of women eligible for the Department's breast and cervical cancer detection and treatment program.

The bill makes the state law conform to the

federal insurance act and the bill makes changes to the Health Reinsurance Association or HRA which prohibit any preexisting condition exclusion or limitation as defined in federal law in comprehensive health care plans issued by that organization to eligible individuals.

And it also requires that organization, the Health Reinsurance Association to include the provision of individual health insurance and add coverage for the individual health insurance market.

It also makes technical corrections to the managed care law and other technical corrections to statutes governing the Department of Mental Retardation, the Department of Public Health and the Office of Policy and Management.

I urge your adoption of this bill.

THE CHAIR:

The question is on passage of the bill. Will you remark? Senator Cook.

SEN. COOK:

Thank you, Madam President. I rise in support of the bill and I would like to, for purposes of legislative intent, make it crystal clear that the purpose and function of Section 38 regarding Southbury Training School notwithstanding any commissioner for

now or in the future, this language makes it very clear that there will be no new admissions to the Southbury Training School.

From the moment of the decision of CARC v. Thorn, Connecticut embarked on a program of closing its institutions. Out of respect for the people who have chosen to stay there, we will indeed embark on a program of improving the facilities for people who are living in Southbury now. But as a strong advocate for people with mental retardation, as a mother of a child with mental retardation, it is the policy now by law, in this state, that we will not institutionalize people with mental retardation.

They belong in our towns and our communities with us, with the best care that we can bring them in our communities and I am very pleased that we are now codifying this in law. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cook. Will you remark further?  
Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you to Senator Harp. When was the last time somebody was entered into Southbury Training School?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Through you, Madam President, unfortunately I don't have that information. I can have it sent to you, but I'm not aware when the last time was when someone was admitted.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Madam President, I don't suspect it's been within recent history that the people that are currently at Southbury are people that have been there for many years and that there have been no new admissions.

I, too, am a parent of retarded child and have always felt that we should have many options available to the families of children in this state. What is right for some families may not necessarily be right for other families and I am sorry, but we are losing an array of services.

Although we have not been using that array of services at this time, I feel very strongly that we should not close the door on these institutions so rapidly that as some of these children are getting older and parents are getting older, we do not have the community support systems yet in place to handle all

the needs of a lot of these families.

I find it very disconcerting that we are placing into statute right now, something which may be a hindrance. I personally would not like to see anybody institutionalized in that setting and yet I do know that there are families out there who would disagree and I feel that we're just taking away an option from them by putting this into statute. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further?  
Senator DeLuca.

SEN. DELUCA:

Thank you, Madam President. I would just like to also clarify something regarding Southbury Training School which is in my district. There was a task force a couple of years ago that was authorized by this Legislature to study the focus of Southbury Training School.

And one of their recommendations was to change the focus of Southbury Training School to train and to be able to take care of those people with mental retardation as they get older because right now in the state, whether they're in the communities or no matter where they are, there are not facilities to take care

of these people who are susceptible to the diseases of aging at an earlier age than most of us who age normally.

So this is going contrary to the report of that, and in my opinion, it is not in favor of helping those that are mentally retarded but it is taking away a valuable resource for them that would treat them in their later years when they need it and also train people in this focus.

So I think this is wrong that this would be done, and I'm hopeful that in the future that this legislation will understand their mistake. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Sir. Will you remark further? Senator Aniskovich.

SEN. ANISKOVICH:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to associate myself with the remarks of Senator Cook. I want to point out that while I respect completely and understand the position taken by previous speakers with respect to the existence of Southbury Training School and the option of institutional care for those in our community who are developmentally disabled, it is very clear that this

state has once before had a major policy disagreement and discussion about whether or not institutions will survive in this state as an option and we in this state successfully closed Mansfield Training School.

For reasons related to the budget, largely, if not exclusively and understandably during a time like this, this body decided to take a direction which would enhance our ability to capture federal revenues.

Many of us object to that being the exclusive or only basis on which the issue of whether institutions like Southbury will survive and we expect that a full debate on the merits of this issue will come before the state makes a major investment of dollars into maintaining this facility which is contrary to the policy that was previously set by this Legislature and we hope in the future to have the debate that others are asking for and hope that we would have had that before we were here today debating this issue, Madam President, thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Sir. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? If not, would the Clerk please announce a roll call vote. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the

Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

THE CHAIR:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted? If all members have voted, the machine will be locked. The Clerk please take a tally.

THE CLERK:

Motion is on passage of Emergency Certified HB8007 in concurrence with the House. Total number voting, 33; necessary for passage 17. Those voting "yea", 31; those voting "nay", 2. Those absent and not voting, 3.

THE CHAIR:

The bill is passed. Senator Jepsen.

SEN. JEPSEN:

Madam President, at this time I ask that we turn to Senate Agenda No. 2 and take up the Emergency Certified HB8008.

THE CLERK:

Calling from Senate Agenda No. 2, Page 1, Emergency Certified HB8008 An Act Concerning Revisions to Expenditures for the Programs and Services of the Department of Public Health. The bill is accompanied

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SPEAKER HYSLOP:

House stands in recess.

(House recessed at 3:40 o'clock p.m., reconvened at 4:18 o'clock p.m., Speaker Ritter in the Chair)

SPEAKER RITTER:

The Chamber will come back to order. The Clerk please call 8007.

CLERK:

Emergency Certified Bill, AN ACT CONCERNING EXPENDITURES FOR THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Dillon, you have the floor Madam.

REP. DILLON: (92nd)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I want to make sure that the minority is in position of the Amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

They have.

REP. DILLON: (92nd)

Thank you. If I can repeat, I'd like to move the Amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Question is on adoption of the Amendment. Will

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you remark further Madam?

REP. DILLON: (92nd)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. This Amendment is largely technical, but there is one section which we believed was in the DSS implementer which includes a statutory formula for medicaid dollars for the federally qualified health centers.

We understood it was in the other bill. I was requested earlier today by the co-chair of our subcommittee to include this because it had slipped out of the other bill. And it's a fairly straightforward piece. That's the substantive part of this Amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further on House A? Will you remark further? If not, I will try your minds. All in favor signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Opposed, no. House A is adopted. Will you remark further on this bill? Representative Cocco.

REP. COCCO: (127th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker, good afternoon sir.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Good afternoon Madam.

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REP. COCCO: (127th)

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk has an Amendment 7368, would he please call and I be allowed to summarize?

SPEAKER RITTER:

Clerk has LCO 7368, if he may call it, and Representative Cocco would like to summarize.

CLERK:

LCO 7368 House B, offered by Representatives Cocco and Simmons.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Cocco.

REP. COCCO: (127th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Amendment simply deletes Section 73 from the bill before us. And Section 73 deals with learner's permit. A subject that is under the purview of the Transportation Committee. What this particular language does is exempt those people who drive ambulances who are sixteen and seventeen years old in the city of Darien specifically, who are responding to a call from the provisions of the learner's permit.

I think we have to reflect a little bit while about the purpose of the original law, and that purpose was to protect people, particularly our young people from any harm coming to them while they were learning

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how to use a motor vehicle.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would say also that it's discriminatory for us to say that a certain section of our population, for whatever reason, should be exempted from a law that's going to apply to everyone else.

And to further point that out, during this particular session, Representative Sawyer had a young lady come up and observe the General Assembly for a day. And that young lady asked if she could do an interview on the learner's permit, and of course, I said yes.

And we had our little talk. And at the end of the talk I said to her, how do the youngsters feel about the learner's permit? And her answer simply was, well everyone is doing it. And that's the key. It's fine with the young people as long as everyone is doing it.

But if we now today say that certain people don't have to do it, and next year are faced with other youngsters who think that they're special, and don't have to do it, soon we will have negated a law that we passed to protect our young people.

And another thing that people in the Chamber must remember is that possessors of a learner's permit have not passed a driving test. They have not passed their driver's test. They access their learner's permit

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simply by taking a vision test and a modified written test.

After they have completed their learner's permit, they then take the complete written test and a road test. So what we're saying in this language is that those people who have this particular activity to go to, may go on our limited access highways, may drive at any time of the day or night without anyone else in the car.

And they, not only don't have a driver's license, they haven't been tested. We don't know what their capabilities are. And Mr. Speaker, who assumes the liability in that case? Is the liability assumed then by the State of Connecticut, who is going to pass legislation that says it's alright for them to go behind a motor vehicle in this circumstance and drive.

That liability question is very important for members of this Chamber to consider. Because if the liability comes back to the state, then we are the people who are ultimately going to pay through our constituents' taxes. Mr. Speaker, I move adoption.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Question is on adoption. Madam, will you remark further? Will you remark further? Representative Ryan.

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REP. RYAN:

Mr. Speaker, don't look so surprised that I vote no. Thank you, and I should start off by requesting that everybody oppose this Amendment. And I should also start off by thanking the Chair of the Transportation Committee, and the ranking member, because this was old bill House Bill 5670, which got a public hearing through their courtesy and cooperation.

And you may want to know that this passed the Senate unanimously. It's not a new topic. Got a public hearing. And it got through the three committees that voted on it, which were Public Health, P&D, and Public Safety, unanimously.

And while I hate to differ with the good co-chair of the Transportation Committee, let me just point a few things out to you, that you may want to consider. This is certainly not a bill that favors just my district. And you may hear from other people that this is a nonprofit program benefitting and involving young people in a number of districts.

And I think you'll hear from some of them as we go along. The other thing that you may want to know is, we are not creating a loophole here. What we're really doing is we're grandfathering programs that are successful existing programs that in my district have

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been doing this for, at last count, twenty-seven years.

And I lost track, and maybe somebody remembers at the public hearing, but the gentleman who spoke and gave us these statistics said that there had been at least sixteen thousand trips that this particular service had made.

And, of course, a trip is just one way, doesn't count you getting there, getting back, getting to your vehicle. So it's probably safe to assume there had been forty something thousand trips.

And in that time, in this nearly three decades, they had a total of three accidents, and only one was the fault of a driver. So you might want to know that Section 73, which is actually a more narrow, tighter, version of the bill that almost everybody passed.

In fact, doesn't create a big loophole for anybody. Doesn't allow kids to go out and drive around in general. And I know it's late, and I know we have a lot of things in this bill that's pages and pages, and pages. But I'd ask you to take a second and look at it, and you'll find it's the narrowest exception that you could draw here.

Because somebody has to be in this program in a certified ambulance service. Somebody has to, to do this be in one of these federally certified programs.

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And I think, probably, I think in the course of this going through the four committees, either myself or a few other people are going to speak on this, have probably abused you personally, if you were on those other committees by giving you a copy of the driver training course that you've got to get in and pass to be one of these people driving these vehicles.

It's the course you've got to pass to be an ambulance driver. And if anybody wants one of these, I'll be happy to give you one, or a few other people have them. And if I took the time to read this course syllabus into the record, the Speaker would come over and glare at me with some justification, I wouldn't blame him.

But just let me summarize. There's twenty-one parts of the Emergency Driver Training course. And, obviously, they don't let somebody drive the vehicle unless they've made it through the four check outs, and the different parts of the twenty-one component driver training course, that the minimum time is forty-two hours to complete.

In other words the point is, this is a course that anybody has to pass to be an ambulance driver. Now I did have one analogy that I got through my friend Representative Tercyak. Please pay attention, this is

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a Tony Tercyak story.

And my analogy was, because his door is a few doors down from me, I was listening one day, and I hear Chachelia Bartoli, with an aria from Cozi Fantute, which as you know was written by the favorite composer of Representative Tercyak.

And if you're objection is that you don't think young people should be involved in programs like this, well the analogy I came up with was that Leopold Mozart should have gone to his kid Wolfie when he was about five years old and said, Wolfgang stop belting out these symphonies. You're supposed to be doing chop sticks today. Don't do these symphonies, please do chop sticks.

The point is, and I had a few people ask me this. And it's a very good point. No kid in his right mind is going to get into a program that basically puts you on a track to go to Harvard medical school to do all of this, to get around the learner's permit requirements. In other words, you've got to do exponentially more work to be able to drive these things, than you would ever do in the learner's permit.

The last point that I want to make, I may lie, I may have two last points here. But another point I want to make is, this is not for the benefit of my

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district. Other people have these.

You also might want to know that, lastly, I feel obligated and Representative Beamon isn't here now, but I feel obligated to point out to you that I actually have a certain amount of affection for most of you in this Chamber, and I'd hate to have somebody be getting mail afterwards from people that run services that are nonprofit, volunteer services.

In the case of the one in my district that's an explorer post that engages young people, when it's very hard to get young people involved in worthy programs these days, to do stuff to get them certified to be an EMT.

And I would hate for you to find out in the hustle and bustle here, you mistakenly voted against this program, and voted against a program that's a volunteer program, that involves young people that saves lives. And I would urge you to consider this. Consider how it's been unanimously passed every place it's been seen. And please support it. And I know there's other people who wish to speak for this, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. Will you remark further?

Representative Simmons.

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REP. SIMMONS: (43rd)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the Amendment. Reluctantly, simply because that puts me at some opposition to my colleague, Representative Ryan. And I'd like to begin my remarks in support of the Amendment with an apology to my colleagues.

As ranking member of the Transportation Committee, it's my responsibility in committee to take a position on issues that I feel are important to the committee and to the State of Connecticut. Out of consideration for my colleagues' interest in this bill, I recommended to the Chair, and went along with the change of reference on this item even though I knew that, speaking for myself, and for some other members of the committee, there was I think, legitimate opposition.

And in so doing, have probably distorted the record in an unfair fashion. And for that I do apologize. And I can assure the members that in the future I will do my job in committee, and will vote issues up and down, and will no longer engage in changes of reference.

Because, I do think that action can be misleading. I support the Amendment and I oppose the language. First and foremost because I don't believe the language is necessary for these programs in this case.

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We had hearings on this subject and when people came from the Darien emergency services to testify, they expressed concern that the learner's permit bill would, and I quote, "terminate the program." But throughout the course of about twenty minutes of questions and answers, we learned that, in fact, this language does not terminate the program.

In fact, does not have any, except a modest administrative impact on the program. In describing the program to us, the witnesses at the hearings indicated that young people do not begin to drive, do not begin to drive until they have six months of what they call, a clean slate.

Which is six months of driving. After that six months, then they begin to start the driver training in the ambulances, and have three months of that. If you understand the provisions of the learner's permit bill, you'll understand that the learner's permit is held for six months for those who don't go to driving school, four months for those who do attend a driving school.

There is nothing to prevent these young people from actually driving an ambulance with a qualified instructor in the ambulance during the period of time that they hold the learner's permit.

When we inquired as to how these provisions, in

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fact, would affect the program, Mr. Dobbie stated we can fudge a little bit. This is in regard to the six month requirement of clear driving on our training. The six months that we require now of trouble free driving.

Sure, we can cut back on that. I did not get the impression from his testimony, Mr. Speaker, that the provisions of the learner's permit were much more than an inconvenience once we got through the hearing process.

And I don't believe that they are much more than an inconvenience. I do not believe that these provisions do any harm. So the next question is, does the language in the bill do harm? And in my opinion Mr. Speaker, it does.

Because, it opens up an exception to the learner's permit bill. The learner's permit bill applies equally in its current form to all of our sixteen and seventeen year olds. It's equitable. There are no exceptions. What this language does is opens up an exception for a category of young people.

And these are very fine young people. They're volunteers. And that's terrific. And we think that's great. But who's next? Who's next? Nurses aides? People working for the fire departments? It's my

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understanding from the testimony we had on the bill that you can be sixteen or seventeen and work for a fire department.

Is that the next exemption to these provisions? You can't fight the fire, but you can be at the house and you can be involved with the calls to service. So is that the next group for an exemption? Or lifeguards? Nurses aides, etcetera, etcetera.

I think that it is bad policy to pass a law that is equitable across the board, and then to start creating exceptions for it. I will also point out to my colleagues that this language in its current form, which is different from the language that we had before us the last day of the session.

The language they had before us the last day of the session was discretionary. It allowed the Commissioner to grant these exceptions according to a set of standards if he so desired. This language is different. In line 2353, it mandates that this category of person shall be exempt from the provisions when they are on route to or from the location of the ambulance for purposes of responding to an emergency call.

I don't read from this language that the Commissioner has any discretion in this matter, if the

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individual meets the following criteria. He or she is an active member of a certified services, has commenced an emergency vehicle operator's course, and has had state and national criminal history records checks.

If the person meets that criteria, the commissioner then has no alternative but to provide this exemption. There's no discretion there. I think this is also a problem when you consider that under the terms of this language, these people may hold a learner's permit, but they are not licensed. Not licensed, and not tested.

So then I ask you, what are we doing here? We're providing a mandatory exemption for these individuals so that they can drive their vehicles unattended when they respond or go on route to the location of the ambulance for purposes of responding to a call.

Day or night, seven days a week, all weather conditions, and no limitation on interstate highway. I think this is a terrible mistake Mr. Speaker. Furthermore, on the issue of harm.

What harm does it do? These are good kids. Well we got good kids all over the State of Connecticut. We got good kids involved in all kinds of volunteer activities. The learner's permit process or program does not discriminate between good kids and bad kids.

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It simply says that statistically this age group is most liable to be in an accident of any age group in the country. And this age group can reduce their mortality and reduce their accident rate if they participate in a program of learning how to drive.

There's nothing new in this. It's been done in other states. It has saved lives. We debated the learner's permit issue last year. We had a technical corrections bill in January of this year to fine tune it.

And in fact, in June of this year, on recommendation of the minority leader, we added another change to the language to allow thirty days instead of a longer period for the exemption for interstate highway driving.

So I think that the Chair of the Transportation Committee, members of the Transportation Committee, and the Chamber itself have been flexible on the issue. Flexible on the issue. But this language goes beyond flexibility, Mr. Speaker. It creates loopholes for a category of young persons that I believe jeopardizes the public safety, and creates risks on our highways. On that basis, Mr. Speaker, I oppose the language of the underlying bill, and support the Amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

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Will you remark further? Representative McDonald.

REP. MCDONALD: (148th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this Amendment. Last week, or the week of the last day of the session, this bill was before us. I'd like to remind the members here that this bill passed three committees and the General Assembly unanimously.

It passed Public Health. It passed Planning and Development, and Public Safety. The issue here about Explorer Troop 53, is about less than a mile from my home. And I'm very, very familiar what these young people have done throughout the years in delivering emergency services to the Town of Darien.

It's not just the Town of Darien, because they've also helped as backup people to my community of Glenbrook, when they've had to have extra help on a call. Here we have a group of young teenagers who are willing to put in hundreds, and hundreds of hours supplying the ambulance service for Darien. And as Representative Ryan said, there are other communities in the state that have other programs like this.

Representative Simmons is advocating no exceptions to anything ever. But what we do up here, in many cases, is make exceptions and look at particular things. The, up until last year we had a different

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form of licensing and permits.

What we're saying is that for forty or fifty years in Connecticut, it was terrible horrible thing that we had. And now that we passed this new law everybody has to walk lock step with it. No matter how it affects the community, or how it affects the young people who are serving this, in this ambulance corps.

I'd like to remind the General Assembly, we're often talking here about projects for teenagers, how you can get them involved in community projects to have input. Here we have a young group of people who are willing to give their time and effort to supply ambulance services in Darien.

It's a boy scout troop, that's what it is. And they put hundreds of hours into this. And since this three committees in this General Assembly passed this unanimously, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for a roll call on this issue.

SPEAKER RITTER:

All those in favor of roll call, signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER RITTER:

They'll be a roll call.

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REP. MCDONALD: (148th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further? Representative Nystrom.

REP. NYSTROM: (46th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join and rise opposing this Amendment. I remember the debate the other night, or the other month. I didn't they were Explorers. I was once an Explorer. More to the point, it seems to me we need a little common sense here.

These individuals are in fact being taught to drive very complex apparatus. And I would suspect that the driver training course that they are involved in, far exceeds anything that we could imagine, that we expect of them under our current law that this exemption provides for their ability to do their volunteer work. So I don't think the Amendment's needed. And I don't think that caution is needed. These young people are involved in something very worthy. And we should let them continue. Thank you.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. Representative Harkins. It's up there, okay it's on now.

REP. HARKINS: (120th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to urge rejection

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of this Amendment also. My town of Stratford does have a volunteer ambulance service, and we are dependent upon the sixteen year old drivers to participate in this service.

You know, I have to stand here and wonder about whatever happened to parental responsibility. I was an opponent of the learner's permit to begin with. And here we have something that has worked in the past, and we're looking to change it.

If the parents don't feel as though the child is mature enough to drive this vehicle, then maybe the parents should make the decision whether or not that person should do it. Right now the volunteers that do participate, they're responsible, they're workers.

God forbid if we have workers. They do good for the community, and it allows them to be good citizens. And it helps them to grow. If anything, it will help them be more mature for their future. These are good kids trying to participate in a good program, and we're looking to penalize them with this proposed Amendment.

It's important in my town that we rely on these sixteen year olds, they've done an excellent job. And I urge rejection of this proposed Amendment. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

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Thank you sir. Will you remark further?

Representative Roy.

REP. ROY: (119th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this Amendment. Once again we're, we pass a law and immediately we're asked to carve out an exception. And soon other carve outs are requested, and the law that we passed, and passed with reason, is stricken from the books.

Let me remind members of this Chamber that testimony showed that sixteen and seventeen year olds represented six to seven percent of the drivers in Connecticut, and they also represented participation in thirteen percent of the accidents.

And if that's not frightening enough, in Louisiana the latest figures, they're involved in twenty-five percent of the accidents. There is a reason for this law. We have to give these kids more experience before they get on the road. And I ask all members of the Chamber to approve this Amendment. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Caruso.

REP. CARUSO: (126th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in

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opposition to the Amendment. When I was a young man I served as President of the Explorer Presidents Association for Fairfield County. And in particular, exploring is a program in the Boy Scouts of America for young men and women, teenage age that are interested in exploring, if you will, a certain discipline in career development.

It goes into marine biography, or biology. It goes into medical programs. It goes into the areas of law enforcement, and also emergency medical services. In each of those disciplines, there is extensive training, career development, and most notably, this particular Explorer post in Darien has received national awards for their service to that community.

They provide the ambulance service for that community. The leadership of that community, and in particular of that post, is extremely distinguished with qualified individuals along with the young people that receive extensive training in order to carry out their services.

They are unique young men and women that take their positions extremely seriously. In addition, many of those young people go on to be emergency medical technicians, certain level paramedics, and also in the fields of other medical services such as physicians, or

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nurses, or services of that nature.

I think in this particular case, the Assembly would be prudent to allow this exception because of what these young people do, and the service they provide. In addition, they must receive national training for ambulance driving, which as Representative Ryan has stated is extremely extensive.

During my tenure as the President of the Explorers Association, I worked with Explorer posts throughout Fairfield County, most notably this one, on visits and discussions with their leadership, both adult and young people wise.

And I think the Assembly would do well to oppose this Amendment, and to allow this service to continue. The service, as Representative Ryan has stated, has been in existence for well over twenty years, and has done a great service for the people of Darien. But also there are other such experiences, or posts, throughout Fairfield County, and throughout the State of Connecticut.

Without further ado, Mr. Speaker, I call upon my colleagues to oppose this Amendment. Thank you.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further? Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER: (55th)

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Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this particular Amendment, sir. Believing that we're only talking about four months. We're talking a very short period of time in which we are expecting that these young people will gain some of the knowledge that they would have gotten prior to the learner's permit bill, perhaps a whole year before when they would have been driving with their parents because we had a very loose interpretation of when students could start to drive.

Now we have a very tight interpretation of when students start to drive. The learner's permit says six months if your parents teach you, and only four months if you go to an approved driving school.

When we look at this bill, and it talks about when such holder is en route to or from the location of an ambulance for the purposes of responding to an emergency call. I would like to stress that this is a time, whether the roads are dry, wet, snowy, congested or clear, this student will be responding in a fairly rapid rate, to get to the ambulance in order to go on the emergency call.

I would say that four months is not a significant amount of time, certainly to the organization. I feel that it is certainly an important amount of time when you're looking at the knowledge of a student who is

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behind the wheel of a dangerous weapon -- a vehicle.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further? Representative Cocco.

REP. COCCO: (127th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a couple of points that I'd like to make. Representative Caruso should know then, and Representative Ryan, that we're not here to impugn the services given by Post, I believe it's 53.

What they do is a very valid service. I will say, however, that it came as a great surprise to me, and many other members of the committee that we did have sixteen year olds out there driving emergency vehicles. But to expound upon that, there is no need, no need at all for this language.

Number one, people start in this post when they're fifteen years of age. How they get back and forth when they're fifteen, I do not know. But I'm sure they could get back and forth the same way until they're sixteen years and four months.

The bill that passed the other committees, Mr. Speaker, was not the language that we have before us. If I remember it correctly, I believe that it simply excused those people from a learner's permit, which

meant that they would have had to have full licensure before driving a vehicle.

What we have before us now does not do that. It says if you're in possession of a learner's permit that you can drive a vehicle all by yourself under any conditions when you are responding to a call.

Now, when you're responding to a call, obviously it's not in the best of circumstances. You're going, perhaps, at a rate of speed that exceeds one that you might be comfortable with.

But Mr. Speaker, this law has been in effect for six months. And for six months, Post 53 has lived within the law, I certainly expect. And their ambulance service continues to function very well, simply because if the people who are manning the ambulance need to be there at a time that is not the day time, and they don't have transportation, they have the availability of staying overnight. So even saying, well my goodness we have to get these kids from their home to the Post doesn't suffice.

That's an experience, that's a valid experience in the ambulance service, one that they need to have, and one that they can get during those four months before they have licensure. And Mr. Speaker, Representative Ryan and a few other people talked about this wonderful

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course on ambulance driving that is so much better than an ordinary drivers course.

Well, let me tell the Chamber that that course is not even started until the youngsters are sixteen-and-a-half. They don't even start the course until they're sixteen-and-a-half. So we have these people with a learner's permit, no valid license, no experience, out on the road, before they have even begun to start to learn to drive an ambulance.

Mr. Speaker, there is no reason in the world for this language. No reason in the world why we are addressing this language, this issue, in a Special Session. And I ask my colleagues to please vote favorably on the Amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Green.

REP. GREEN: (1st)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief, just to say that I also rise in support of this Amendment. I am a little confused because to me, this new language is actually an expansion of the rights of sixteen and seventeen year olds to drive.

In the first bill that we did not pass, so in all due respect to my colleague, Representative Ryan, who talked about almost everyone agreed, apparently this

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bill did not pass before. However, in the new language it talks about the holder being able to drive en route to or from the location of the ambulance.

So not only does it expand the right of that sixteen year old to drive the ambulance, but it expands to ride that a sixteen or seventeen year old to drive back and forth to get to the ambulance.

And again, I think that's also creating some confusion. We created a bill that we thought would create a safe environment for our sixteen year olds on the road. And, therefore, I rise in support of this Amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further? Representative Simmons.

REP. SIMMONS: (43rd)

Thank you Mr. Speaker, for the second time. Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on a couple of things that have been said thus far. The issue has come up about common sense, and whether or not ambulance driving training is better or worse than the training you get from a drivers school.

And I will point out for the record that during the committee hearings on this issue, the folks that are running this ambulance program down in Darien made it very clear that their system is a graduated system

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and you begin driving your car, then you drive a van, and then you graduate to the ambulance.

And I will quote from the record. They need to be learning in their own cars before they actually get in the ambulance. We want them to know how to drive before they get into the ambulance.

Driving an ambulance is extremely different from driving a car. It's a graduation, which I agree with. The Office of Legislative Research, the fruits of their research also show that driver training for a car, and for an ambulance are different.

That is why this program has a six month period before these young people even start. And that six month period is administratively imposed by them. That coincides with the learner's permit process. So you see there's really no conflict here.

And there's nothing being said here that really interferes with the program. If there might be some slight inconveniences, but that's the extent of it. Now I point out to my colleagues, and I hope they focus on this very carefully.

The language in the bill today, tonight, states that the Commissioner shall exempt these people from the provisions of the law if they are responding to a call and need to drive their car to the ambulance.

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These people do not have a drivers license at this point in time. They've been granted a learners permit. They have not completed a drivers test at this point in time according to this language. They only have a learners permit.

What are we saying here? What are we saying? We're saying that somebody who holds a learners permit, not a license, somebody who has not taken the exam, is authorized to drive a vehicle to or from the ambulance responding to a call.

As Representative Sawyer clearly pointed out, when you're responding to a call, there's a tendency to hurry. There's no restriction on day/night. There's no restriction on weather. There's no restriction on highway.

This, not only authorizes, it mandates that the Commissioner allow these people to do this when they're holding a learners permit. This is very, very, very different from what's been discussed in this debate. And yet this is the language of the law. This is the language that we're going to go forward with if we don't support this Amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're making a terrible mistake if we don't strike this language and try to fix this in some other way. I urge my colleagues, read the

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language.

SPEAKER RITTER:

One second sir.

REP. SIMMONS: (43rd)

Of the bill that we are striking before voting on this issue. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. People who don't like Special Sessions, you guys are pretty good at them.

Representative Ryan, you have the floor.

REP. RYAN: (141st)

Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, and I know we have a lot of other business, I don't want to protract this. There's a couple of very quick things I want to say to correct the record. People might be concerned because we've used the term "exception" and "loophole."

I think I've deliberately said twice in my remarks, the intention here is to grandfather the folks. It's not just my district, Representative Harkins spoke about his district. I know Representative Powers has one in hers.

It's to grandfather these programs that have doing this for something like thirty years. So if, and my distinguished friend from Stonington ever has the situation, we hope nobody ever does, where you drive

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down I-95 and there's a problem.

The people who come and rescue you now are from either this place or the one in Greenwich, or the one in Stratford, and this is how they've been doing it with these sort of people.

Their statistics have been overwhelmingly good. They're safer than any other part of the population. The last thing I just want to address is the comment that we don't need this. And I'll just take a second. Two of the good Senators from that other Chamber upstairs went to the trouble to bother the Commissioner to get a letter about this.

And the Commissioner could not produce a letter that would satisfactorily solve this problem. Because the Commissioner, and I've got the letter and I'm not going to take your time to read it, but the Commissioner was under the impression that, you can be doing your learner's permit time on a farm tractor if you want to. It's not the problem with the vehicle. The problem is, how do people get back and forth to these vehicles.

And that's why this in its final refined version is so narrowly drafted. I'm not for any loopholes for anything. Although as Representative Beamon said, we're the folks that makes the rules. I guess we can

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make the loopholes if we want to.

But this is to keep these very worthy programs that engage kids and save lives going. And I would think if we ever want to err, we wouldn't want to err on the side of strictly interpreting a regulation. I think we'd want to err on being able to have these programs continue. Thank you Mr. Speaker, and I'm sorry it took so long.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further? Representative Roy.

REP. ROY: (119th)

For the second time Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Please proceed sir.

REP. ROY: (119th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I just want to stress once again that passage of this bill could very well open the State of Connecticut to liability problems. And the first time an accident occurs with a driver with a learners permit, and we're sued, you've been told before hand. You've been warned before hand. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. Will you remark further? If not, staff and guests to the well of the House. The machine

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will be open.

CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber. The House is voting House Amendment Schedule B, by roll call. Members to the Chamber.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Have all members voted? If all members have voted, please check your machine make sure that your vote is properly recorded. If it has, machine will be locked. Clerk please take the tally. Clerk please announce the tally.

CLERK:

House Amendment Schedule B to Emergency Certified Bill 8007.

Total Number Voting	127
Necessary for Adoption	64
Those Voting Yea	44
Those Voting Nay	83
Those absent and not voting	24

SPEAKER RITTER:

The Amendment fails. Will you remark further on this bill? Representative Gyle.

REP. GYLE: (108th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like, I have an

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Amendment on this bill, LCO 10259. I would like to call and have the.

SPEAKER RITTER:

LCO 10259 an opportunity.

REP. GYLE: (108th)

And I be allowed to summarize.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Clerk will call, then you can summarize it Madam.

CLERK:

LCO 10259 House C, offered by Representative Nystrom, et al.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Gyle. Representative Gyle, you have the floor Madam.

REP. GYLE: (108th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. This Amendment strikes, "The Commissioner shall waive fees," on line 817, and goes down to striking the lines up to 820, inclusive with, ending with "the Commissioner." And what this does is it deletes waiving fees for planned parenthood for the kids for sexually transmitted disease testing. I move adoption.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Question is on adoption. Will you remark further?

REP. GYLE: (108th)

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Yes, thank you Mr. Speaker. I think it's self-explanatory. I don't think at this point in time we should be waiving fees. I understand that there could be an impact to the state as far as getting the money from the fees from Planned Parenthood, but there would probably be a wash that the state itself would then have to provide the kids.

I think that's the proper role of the state. I don't have a problem with that. And I would urge members to support the Amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you Madam. Anybody else care to comment?  
If not, I'll try your minds. All those in favor  
signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Opposed no. Amendment passes. Will you remark further on this bill as amended? Representative Roraback.

REP. RORABACK: (64th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. The Clerk has an Amendment, LCO 7365. Would the Clerk please call the Amendment and may I be allowed to summarize?

SPEAKER RITTER:

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Clerk has LCO 7365, if he may call it then Representative Roraback would like to summarize.

REP. RORABACK: (64th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

CLERK:

LCO 7365 House D, offered by Representative Roraback, et al.

SPEAKER RITTER:

You have the floor sir.

REP. RORABACK: (64th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. This Amendment, Mr. Speaker, attempts to give to volunteer ambulance personnel and volunteer fire fighters injured on drills, the same level of benefits which is currently enjoyed by volunteer fire fighters injured while fighting a fire. I move adoption, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Question is on adoption. Will you remark further sir? Will you remark further? If not, I'll try your minds. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER RITTER:

All those opposed no. The Amendment passes. Will you remark further on this bill as amended? If not,

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staff and guests, oh Representative Nardello.

REP. NARDELLO: (89th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of establishing legislative intent. I just have one question to the proponent of the bill.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Please proceed.

REP. NARDELLO: (89th)

Representative Dillon, in line 1926 we make a reference to prudent lay person. And I just wanted to clarify for legislative intent, are we using the American College of Emergency Physician's definition of prudent lay person?

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Dillon.

REP. DILLON: (92nd)

Through you Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that we are.

REP. NARDELLO: (89th)

Thank you.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further? If not, Representative Dandrow.

REP. DANDROW: (30th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'll certainly be brief.

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I just wanted to say that I certainly do support this bill as amended. Particularly Section 9, which is the newborn screening, which can certainly prevent a lot of children from having to have some very serious defects that we can catch, some put some amplification on, and really help them a long way in overcoming a disability that would go undetected for years.

Personally, I had to go to California to have my daughter diagnosed. And I only hope that this will prevent other parents other parents from having to go and wait till my daughter was two. And we could do this right away. And it would be a great way in helping our hearing impaired youngsters.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you Madam. Will you remark further? If not, staff and guests to the well of the House. The machine will be open.

CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber. The House is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber.

SPEAKER RITTER:

The machine is still open. If all members have voted, the machine will be locked. Clerk please take a tally. Clerk please announce the tally.

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CLERK:

Emergency Certified Bill 8007, as amended by HouseA, C, and D.

Total Number Voting	124
Necessary for Passage	63
Those Voting Yea	118
Those Voting Nay	6
Those absent and not voting	27

REP. JARJURA: (74th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

For what reason do you rise sir?

REP. JARJURA: (74th)

For a point of personal privilege.

SPEAKER RITTER:

I'll close this off. The bill passes.

Representative Jarjura.

REP. JARJURA: (74th)

Yes, thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, throughout the day I have been selling, or asking for donations for the Exchange Club's Blue Ribbon campaign to support our center for the prevention of child abuse, and I just wanted to publicly thank all the members that I was able to get to who did purchase a blue ribbon, to either take home with them, or gave