



DATE: March 20, 2018
TO: Human Services Committee
FROM: Julia Wilcox, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy
RE: H.B. No. 5255: AN ACT CONCERNING THE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ADVISORY COUNCIL
H.B. No. 5257: AN ACT CONCERNING REPORTS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Good morning Sen. Moore, Sen. Markley, Rep. Abercrombie, Rep. Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Julia Wilcox, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy at the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. The Alliance is Connecticut's statewide association of community nonprofits. Our members deliver essential services to more than half a million people each year and employ almost 14% of Connecticut's workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill No. 5255: AN ACT CONCERNING THE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ADVISORY COUNCIL and House Bill No. 5257: AN ACT CONCERNING REPORTS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER.

[H.B. No. 5255](#): AN ACT CONCERNING THE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Alliance supports House Bill number 5255, which seeks to eliminate the planned termination of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council.

The mission of the Autism Spectrum Disorders Advisory Council (ASDAC) is to "expand and improve on Autism Spectrum Disorder services through the development of a statewide service delivery system for individuals across the lifespan and their families." The ASDAC was created to "develop a system that is accessible, affordable, accountable and offers quality services by providing and monitoring the use of evidence based, promising and best practices, education professionals and the community, facilitating interagency collaboration and utilizing data driven decision making methods to evaluate effectiveness."

The goal of the ASDAC is to provide advice and counsel to the Commissioner of DSS regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the Autism Feasibility Study workgroup - with the ultimate goal of designing and developing a statewide service delivery system for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families, by building on existing infrastructure and resources and drawing on the experiences of other states.

The ASDAC plays an incredibly important role in the development and enhancement of services for this underserved and often, misunderstood population. The ASDAC is an example of a successful partnership between the state, the public, and a broad range of stakeholders – each essential to the success and achievement of the collective goals. While a great deal of progress has been achieved, there is much work to be done to continue this momentum and fully support individuals on the spectrum. We urge the Committee to support House Bill number 5255.

H.B. No. 5257: AN ACT CONCERNING REPORTS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

The Alliance supports House Bill number 5255, with recommendations. The purpose of the bill is to reduce from seventy-two to twenty-four hours the amount of time a mandated reporter has to file a report of suspected abuse or neglect involving a person with intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder.

The reduced timeframe for mandated reporters to file the appropriate reports would provide an opportunity for the system to better serve and protect the individuals involved. The anticipated result would be to reduce the extent of abuse and/or neglect for each individual case and to reduce the number and severity of cases throughout the overall system. While The Alliance is in full support of the spirit of the legislation, we respectfully request that the following recommendations are included in your consideration:

1. **Further Clarification**: The reduction of time from seventy-two to twenty-four hours requires a shift in process for the mandated reporters, which may be a challenge, during the initial implementation. We are pleased that the proposed legislation includes the following: [“An unsuccessful attempt to make an initial report to the commissioner on a weekend or after normal business hours shall not be construed as a violation of this section if reasonable attempts are made to reach the commissioner as soon as practicable.”](#) We recommend similar additional clarification be added in several other areas to ensure that all mandated reporters are providing timely responses which fully meet the requirements:
 - 1a Lines 24 – 26 require a mandated reporter to “... report such information or cause a report to be made in any reasonable manner to the Commissioner.” We request the Committee define what would constitute “reasonable manner” (direct phone contact, email, voicemail, etc.)
 - 1b Please provide a clear definition regarding titles of the specific individuals who would be considered appropriate recipients of notification (For example: Commissioner, Designee of the Commissioner, etc.)
 - 1c Please provide clarification as to whether the proposed legislation would still allow the opportunity for reporters to remain anonymous.
 - 1d Please provide an exception to the time frames, when the provider has made unsuccessful attempts to receive verification from family members, when an individual lives at home. Such contact is often necessary to verify the concern, and avoid unintended consequences.
2. **Consistency re: Process for Response from Multiple State Agencies**: Mandated reporters are required to report suspected abuse or neglect to multiple State Agencies, depending on the age of the individual involved. Providers report that there is a longer response time from DSS (than other state agencies), when reporting cases to the Department of Social Services for individuals over the age of sixty.

We urge the Committee to continue support of House Bill number 5257, with consideration of the recommendations as outlined above.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. No. 5255 and H.B. No. 5257. Please feel free to contact me with questions or for additional information.

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