

Judiciary Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-397 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNMENT

Title: ACCOUNTABILITY.

Vote Date: 3/23/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/9/2026

File No.: 399

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Americans are concerned with the actions taken by federal agents with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), especially with the recent events that occurred in Minnesota over the course of the past few months. People are turning to local and state governments to see what can be done to try to hold federal officials accountable for their actions, and this bill attempts to address some of those major concerns. Among some of those concerns that have been brought to the attention of the General Assembly, the issue of those whose constitutional rights are violated is addressed by allowing those individuals to bring actions against federal agents. For investigations involving federal agents using deadly force, the bill allows the Office of the Inspector General to conduct its own investigation (like the Office already does for state and local law enforcement), instead of having the federal government outright exclude local Connecticut law enforcement from being involved in the investigation. As many federal agents throughout the country have been increasingly wearing masks or face coverings while conducting their operations, this bill seeks to limit that concern and provide more transparency by prohibiting all law enforcement officers from wearing masks (with certain narrow exceptions). In an effort to try to limit where civil arrests can take place and protect communities, the bill creates “protected areas” (ex. hospital, homeless shelter, etc.) and establishes a requirement that for a civil arrest to occur in a protected area, there must be a signed judicial warrant. In response to reports that the 12,000 ICE agents hired over the past year, more than doubling the size of the agency, have received far less than this minimally reasonable amount of training, this bill limits when POST may waive the basic training program for police candidates who already have comparative certification, to now require explicitly that the candidate has completed a minimum of 480 hours of training. Finally, in an effort to inform communities on the between ICE and Connecticut residents, the bill establishes a statewide database to document these interactions.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language removes former section 10 regarding the creation of a dashboard and adds new sections 10 and 11, which were formerly HB-05448, though in section 11, “federal law enforcement official or police officer” is replaced with “peace officer as defined in in section 51-277a, as amended by this act”.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

William Tong, Attorney General: Attorney General William Tong stated that he supported the bill. He explained that the proposal sought to increase the accountability of public officials and to protect the constitutional rights of Connecticut residents. He emphasized that one of the fundamental principles of democracy was that no one was above the law, and that states played an important role in safeguarding constitutional rights. He noted that the safeguards in Sections 1 and 2 served as an important check on federal authority. He concluded that the bill was necessary to cultivate trust and integrity within public institutions.

Judicial Branch: The Judicial Branch stated that it did not take a position on the underlying policy but requested several amendments to address implementation concerns. It asked for changes to Sections 1 and 2 and explained that, given the process and IT system updates required to implement Sections 2 and 3, the effective dates should be moved to October 1, 2026.

Division of Criminal Justice: The Division of Criminal Justice explained that it already maintained broad authority to investigate without the specific grant of authority contemplated in the bill. However, consistent with the intent of the legislation, the Division asserted that because the Office of the Inspector General conducted independent investigations of all peace officer involved uses of deadly force, the definitional change was warranted to encompass the conduct of all federal law enforcement agents. The Division stated that uses of deadly force by federal agents had historically raised unique issues in Connecticut and therefore expressed support for sections of the bill.

Commissioner Ronnell A. Higgins, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection: Commissioner Higgins stated that the scope of the bill represented a major statewide data infrastructure initiative and noted that this initiative was not included in the Governor’s proposed FY2027 budget.

Department of Administrative Services: The agency commented on fiscal concerns, stating that funding required to develop a dashboard was not included in the Governor’s 2027 budget adjustment.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senate Democrats: Senate Democrats stated that they supported the bill. They argued that masked and unidentified ICE agents have terrorized citizens in multiple states and that the federal government had failed to take responsibility for actions that undermined democracy. They emphasized that it was essential for all law enforcement, whether local, state, or federal, to be held equally accountable for civil rights violations.

Martin M. Looney, State Senator, President Pro Tempore: Senator Looney expressed support for the bill. He stated that federal authorities had used fear tactics and had funded ICE at unprecedented levels. According to him, ICE had been used to intimidate and silence critics. He emphasized the need for equal accountability across all levels of law enforcement and stated that the bill would protect democracy.

Bob Duff, State Senator, Majority Leader: Senator Duff supported the bill. He stated that the bill was essential to ensure that all law enforcement officials were held accountable for violations of citizens' rights. He described federal ICE deployments as actions taken without regard to constitutional protections and asserted that the bill was necessary to safeguard democracy.

Justin Elicker, Mayor, City of New Haven: Mayor Elicker voiced his support, stating that the bill strengthened accountability for all law enforcement, regardless of jurisdiction, and reaffirmed that government officials must be subject to oversight and legal accountability.

John McNamara, Ward 4 Alderman and Common Council Majority Leader, New Britain: John McNamara stated that he supported the bill, explaining that it strengthened existing statutory protections in light of well documented federal overreach. He argued that federal agents should not have immunity if they disregard the law. He noted that the Constitution provided a means to seek redress for unauthorized interference, including threats, intimidation, and coercion. He referenced a February event when the New Britain Common Council affirmed the city's commitment to safety, dignity, and equal treatment of all residents.

Chelsea-Infinity Gonzalez, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, ACLU-CT: Chelsea-Infinity Gonzalez supports this bill, stating it promotes accountability and transparency by requiring peace officers to be identifiable while on duty. She explained that lack of identification, especially when combined with face coverings, could escalate already tense situations. She added that the bill appropriately removed civil-immunity protections when officers violated an individual's rights.

Jim Adams: Jim Adams supported the bill, stating that residents need protection from unethical and unconstitutional federal actions. He argued that all people had inherent worth and dignity and urged lawmakers to strengthen the bill further if needed.

Jaelyn Alessio, LCSW, NASWCT Macro SW Network: Jaelyn Alessio supports this bill, believing it will provide oversight of federal law enforcement operating in Connecticut. She stated that when federal law enforcement is operating in our communities, there must be transparency and accountability. She explained the main aspects of the bill and emphasized the need to protect the rights of the citizens of Connecticut.

Nina Allred: Nina Allred supports this bill, stating that we depend on immigrant neighbors for many services. She stated that they fear they will not be treated fairly by our justice system and now are afraid to enter a public building when trying to participate in the judicial system. She believes this fear also impacts the children as the children are often used as "bait" to bring in the parents.

Jane Betroth, Counsel, Protect Democracy United: Jane Bentrott supports this bill, stating if any governmental officer violates a constitutional right, there should be a remedy where

they can be sued for money (under federal section 1983). She believes that since the US Constitution allows Connecticut to pass legislation that holds federal officers accountable, the need for this legislation is becoming increasingly apparent and it is needed to protect constituents' constitutional rights.

Cara Bartlett: Cara Bartlett supported the bill, stating that Americans need protection from government overreach. She argued that the country was plunging into authoritarianism and believes that consequences must exist when rights are violated.

Carina Bandhauer: Carina Bandhauer supports this bill. She believes current policies negatively impact children by causing trauma and, just as public policy can cause trauma, it can also prohibit or minimize it. She said this bill has the promise to be a policy that can go a long way in correcting our current misguided federal immigration enforcement tactics.

Marcy Balint: Marcy Balint stated that she supported the bill, explaining that her family had assisted numerous immigrants over the past decade. She emphasized the trauma and hardship caused by ICE enforcement activities and argued for protection of immigrants' civil rights.

Dominick Bosco: Dominick Bosco supports this bill. This makes federal agents subject to the same rules and identification as local and state police. He believes that the federal government has abandoned its responsibility to uphold the Constitution and asks that the statute of limitations allow the necessary investigations and Nuremberg-type prosecutions occur once the Rule of Law is re-established in our country.

Cameron Brewer, Teacher, Central Connecticut State University: Cameron Brewer supports this bill. They stated that people wearing masks are terrorizing communities and it's being funded by the government to do so. They believe the requirements for transparency and accountability are necessary as civil rights protections are only meaningful if they are enforced.

Connecticut Voices for Children (CT Voices): CT Voices supports this bill as potential outcomes may allow for more transparency and accountability when constitutional rights are being violated. It will also allow for legal recourse for individuals who have had rights violated. The oversight of federal law enforcement operating in Connecticut and the prevention of armed forces from other states being allowed in our state without the Governors authorization and unless federally activated should be applauded.

Eric Catey: Eric Catey supports this bill. He believes it is unconscionable that federal agents can violate the civil rights of Connecticut citizens and there are no means for redress. He believes this bill will rectify the problem and give Connecticut's Attorney General, and even everyday citizens, the right to seek redress if rights are violated.

Patricia McCurdy-Crescima: Patricia McCurdy-Crescima supports this bill. She explained that Federal immigration personnel conceal their identities with face coverings and refuse to identify themselves and act recklessly and disregard the law. She believes this bill protects people's ability to hold government officials accountable when constitutional rights are violated.

David Englert: David Englert supports this bill as civil rights have been under attack since 9/11 and currently with the brutal activities of a MAGA police state (ICE). He believes law enforcement should not cover their faces, should display identification, and must be held accountable when they violate our civil rights. He stated that we must also prevent militarization of civilian law enforcement in Connecticut so the Governor's authorization should be required.

Shawn SN: Shawn supports the structure of this bill; however, he feels that it needs two fiscal guardrails discussed in this testimony.

Mary Elizabeth Smith, Co-Deputy Director, Make the Road CT: Mary Elizabeth Smith supports the bill as it strengthens accountability when civil rights are violated and ensures that all law enforcement, including federal operating in the state, are subject to oversight and legal accountability.

Alexander T. Taubes, Attorney: Alexander Taubes supports this bill, stating that its transparency provisions were well-considered. He offered to answer questions or assist with drafting amendments.

Rhett Tock, Staff and Adjunct, University of Hartford: Rhett Tock wrote in support of this bill with modifications presented by Connecticut For All.

Stacy Zimmerman, Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council, (SEIU): Stacy Zimmerman supports this bill, stating it ensures that law enforcement, including federal agents operating in Connecticut, are held accountable if someone's civil rights are violated and protects Connecticut's authority over military activity by requiring the Governor's authorization by another state unless federally activated.

William Yeterian, Member, Hartford Deportation Defense: William Yeterian supports this bill because Connecticut needs to strengthen oversight of federal agents. He emphasized the importance of holding those agents accountable and ensuring people's access to courts if their rights have been violated.

Chelsea Connery, Attorney: Chelsea Connery supports this bill, stating that individuals need a clear path to hold government officials accountable if they violate constitutional rights. She supported provisions preventing armed entry by out-of-state forces without the Governor's authorization and requiring law enforcement to be identifiable, helping with transparency and oversight.

David M Cohen, Esq., Legal Member, ACLU of Connecticut: David Cohen supports this bill and stated that it was both commendable and urgent. He emphasized the necessity of being able to identify law enforcement personnel and underscored the importance of state authority over armed forces unless federal law dictated otherwise.

Stephanie Deceus, Vice President at SEIU District 1199 New England: Stephanie Deceus testified in support of the bill, stating that Connecticut should protect residents most affected by federal policies.

Melissa Cyr, Member of Democratic Socialists of America: Melissa Cyr stated that she supported the bill. She emphasized that it ensured enforceable remedies, required identification of law enforcement, and restricted entry of armed forces without the Governor's approval.

Ed Hawthorne, President, AFL-CIO: Hawthorne supported the bill, stating that transparency, integrity, and public confidence were essential to a strong democracy. He emphasized the bill's protections regarding military activity and its reinforcement of state authority.

Connecticut Citizens Action Group (CCAG): CCAG supported the bill, stating that it provided necessary protections regarding military actions in the state and required the Governor's authorization for the use of armed forces from another state.

9 Anonymous pieces of testimony were submitted without attribution in support of this bill. They argued that government accountability was essential for public trust, that law enforcement must follow the law, and that Connecticut must protect its residents, including from federal agents. They stated that federal agents should be unmasked, identifiable, and equipped with body cameras.

Other testimony: Due to the quantity of testimony received for this bill, it is not possible to provide a written summary for each individual submission. Of the remaining testimonies in opposition to the bill, the following ideas were expressed:

83 pieces of testimony were submitted **in support** of this legislation.

61 pieces of testimony were **in support** of this bill as they believe the federal government should be transparent and held accountable when they violate a person's rights.

47 pieces of testimony were **in support** of this bill as they state the National Guard should not be used for immigration purposes or deployed from another state without the Governor's authorization unless federally mandated.

45 pieces of testimony were **in support** of this bill. They stated that no one is above the law and that federal agents should be identifiable, with badges and without masks, and accountable.

37 pieces of testimony were **in support** of this bill, urging immediate action to prevent Connecticut from becoming like Minnesota, Maine, Oregon, California and elsewhere.

25 pieces of testimony were **in support** of this bill, stating that ICE is violating citizens' constitutional rights.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR HB 5448:

Anonymous 306: Testimony submitted without attribution was submitted in support of this bill. They stated that this bill is necessary because of the actions of ICE and CBP. They support accountability for federal agencies.

Daniel Erwin, President, Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association: Daniel Erwin and The Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association support this bill because it limits federal officers' immunities and provides accountability where existing remedies fail. Erwin highlights systemic abuses by federal agencies such as ICE, CBP, and DHS; including unlawful detentions, intimidation, and suppression of constitutional rights which fall outside the scope of the exclusionary rule in civil immigration matters. CCDLA emphasizes that these actions undermine constitutional protections and democratic accountability, and argue that state governments, through this bill, are best positioned to hold federal agents responsible for harassment, injury, or rights violations. The bill is therefore a necessary mechanism to protect civil liberties and ensure lawful enforcement practices.

Michele Greenburg: Michele Greenburg supports this bill because they believe it will protect students and families across the state. They believe all people deserve due process and freedom from fear of being rounded up.

Rob Pratt: Rob Pratt supports this bill because it is vital that state and federal executive branch officials respect civil liberties, individuals who do not should be held accountable. Pratt believes that those who commit violations should be prohibited from further serving as safety officers.

Jess Zaccagnino, American Civil Liberties Union – CT: The ACLU supports this bill to protect justice and inequality for undocumented people. The ACLU says that the states safety health and values are better served by opting out of participation in federal deportation initiatives. This bill would seek to end immunities for federal agents acting in CT, agencies such as Department of Homeland Security, Customs & Border Patrol, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement would benefit from stronger state oversight. The ACLU says that these agencies are operating beyond their statutory authority and that this bill would address this issue. This bill would offer a clear and durable standard that constitutional rights are enforceable in CT, law enforcement actions remain transparent and accountable and that the state's mor sensitive and essential spaces remain accessible to everyone without fear.

Karen Warinsky, John Watson: These people support this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Police Officers Association of Connecticut (POACT): POACT opposed the bill, stating that it would adversely affect state and local peace officers. The organization argued that although the bill responded to events unrelated to Connecticut law enforcement, state officers would bear the consequences. POACT stated that rank and file officers could have offered meaningful input, if consulted.

Zak Leavy, Deputy Director, AFSCME Council 4: Zak Leavy opposed the bill because certain sections would negatively affect AFSCME members who did not engage in immigration enforcement. He argued that removing immunity did not enhance accountability and would worsen recruitment challenges. He requested removal of Section 9.

Alton Blodgett: Blodgett opposed the bill, stating that although it was framed as promoting transparency and accountability, it imposed new legal liabilities and created a statewide tracking system for interactions between Connecticut and federal immigration authorities. He

argued that many provisions were politically motivated and aimed at discouraging ICE operations.

Joyce the Voice Catalano, Mona Colwell, Jerry Cincotta: These individuals opposed the bill, stating that Connecticut should not interfere with ICE operations.

Anonymous 258, Anonymous 256: Testimony submitted without attribution was submitted in opposition to the bill, stating that it would make immigration enforcement more difficult. They argued that Connecticut should cooperate with federal authorities and follow immigration laws, particularly involving individuals who committed crimes. They stated that Connecticut residents should not be used for political purposes.

Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA): CHA stated that it appreciated Section 7 but had concerns regarding the bill as drafted. It emphasized that hospitals were committed to improving access, affordability, and equity and provided care regardless of ability to pay.

9 pieces of testimony were submitted in **opposition** to this bill.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR HB 5448:

Anonymous 256: Testimony submitted without attribution was submitted in opposition of this bill. They stated that this bill will make it more difficult for immigration enforcement more challenging. The open border policy under the past immigration created a huge issue. Connecticut should follow immigration laws and work with the federal immigration enforcement in a thoughtful and practical way, especially if the immigrant has committed a felony or violated a law. Citizens should not be pawns in political games such as was the case in Minnesota.

Mona Colwell: Mona Colwell opposes this bill because it removes certain protections for federal officers operating in CT. While this bill is framed as an accountability measure, Colwell is worried that this bill is politically motivated to undermine federal law enforcement and discourage cooperation with federal agencies when they operate in CT.

Andrew Fredette, Mike Santangelo, Kim Novak, Andrew Fredette: These people oppose this bill.

Anonymous 258: This person opposes the bill because it seeks to make immigration enforcement more challenging. They point to Minnesota for being an example of what happens when a state does not work with federal agencies, causing costly and detrimental effects for its constituents. This person argued that federal immigration laws should be followed and that not doing so would hurt the state.

Anonymous 414: This person opposes this bill because enough legislation is currently in place.

Alton Blodgett: Alton Blodgett opposes this bill because it removes legal protections for federal officers operating in CT, as well as restricting hiring former federal law enforcement officers. Blodgett claims that while this bill is framed as an accountability measure, the

proposal appears to be politically driven in attempt to undermine federal law enforcement, while discouraging cooperation with them in the state.

Jerry Cincotta: Jerry Cincotta is opposed to this bill because it would restrict the coordination and communication between state and federal officials. The proposals in this bill would make it more difficult for the state to keep residents safe.

Joyce the Voice Catalano: Joyce the Voice Catalano opposes this bill. She believes we shouldn't interfere with the good work of ICE.

Reported by: Bonnie Gray and James Finlay

Date: April 6, 2026