Human Services Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-500 / Bill Status / Public Hearing Testimony
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE-FUNDED CAREGIVER PROGRAM TO ASSIST PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER.
Vote Date: 3/19/2026
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 3/17/2026
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill proposes establishing a state-funded caregiver program for parents of children enrolled in a Medicaid waiver program. Testimony underscores the significant needs of these families, emphasizing how expanded caregiving support can help alleviate the challenges associated with raising children with autism spectrum disorder.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity CWVSEO), Melvette Hill, Executive Director: Supports the bill because it allows necessary support for individuals on the autism spectrum and their caregivers. The Commission highlights that respite services can provide parents and caregivers with short periods of relief from the ongoing responsibilities of caregiving. They echo how support brought by the bill would enable those with autism spectrum disorder skills to learn, increase independence, and foster connections.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Hospital Association: Argues for the passing of SB 500, as it establishes a caregiver respite program to assist parents. CHA notes ASD affects approximately 1 in 31 children worldwide, stating that children/adolescents on the spectrum and families should have access to the right level of services.

The Arc Connecticut, Director of Advocacy, Danielle Middlebrooks: Supports, considering families raising children with autism frequently face extraordinary caregiving responsibilities. The proposed program would help families obtain the assistance they need while allowing children with autism to remain safely supported in their homes and communities.

MBraces, Pradipta Mazumder, Orthodontist: Supports, claiming increased costs and inflation are contributing to financial hardships.

John Kearney, Suffield: A parent, Mr. Kearney comments on the Autism Services wait list, describing it as having increased to over 2,500 individuals and "cheating" people out of Federal benefits they are eligible for. He encourages Connecticut to utilize some of its budget surplus to eliminate the wait.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

CT State Community College, Drew Michael McWeeney, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education: Opposes the bill and the creation of a "state-funded caregiver program that would compensate parents or provide expanded public funding for in-home care." Adds that government programs are funded by people's money, and that the appropriate response should focus on targeted services.

Michael Barnett: Opposes and emphasizes that people "protect your loved ones."

Reported by: Zachary Robinson **Date: March 27, 2026**