

“Don’t turn good intentions into bad policy,” says NARSOL advocate Prizio of CT’s OSJ

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By [Dave Altimari](#) . . . The state Senate late Wednesday passed [a bill](#) to establish a task force to study the placement of registered sex offenders in long-term care facilities, following an [incident](#) last year in which a Massachusetts man allegedly sexually assaulted a nurse at an East Windsor facility.

The task force is a compromise after the initial bill, proposed by State Sen. Saud Anwar, D-South Windsor, drew [heated opposition at a public hearing](#). The initial bill would have required long-term care facilities to check if prospective residents have a criminal history or are on the sex offender registry before they are admitted.

The task force will study “the impacts of residents with such status for both their own and environmental health and well-being,” Anwar said in a statement. Anwar’s district includes

the Fresh River Healthcare Center, where the incident occurred last May. . . .

The law currently places the burden on sex offenders themselves to register, but Anwar's initial bill would hold the nursing home providers more accountable by requiring them to determine if any potential resident is a registered sex offender by seeking a criminal background check through the state Department of Public Health.

Anwar's initial bill would have barred long-term care facilities from admitting people with a "disqualifying offense" without a waiver. The disqualifying offenses listed in the bill ranged from assault, rape and kidnapping to burglary, criminal mischief and trespassing.

But Anwar's proposal drew criticism from several different organizations as a knee-jerk reaction to one incident.

Mag Morelli, president of LeadingAge Connecticut, an association representing not-for-profit provider organizations serving older adults, told the Public Health Committee that "from an implementation perspective, this proposal raises numerous concerns."

"It appears that the facility will be barred from admitting an applicant until it receives notification of the background check from DPH. It is unclear how long an available bed might need to be held open for the duration of a background check," Morelli said. . . .

At one point during the public hearing on the original bill, Anwar and Cindy Prizio, executive director One Standard of Justice, an advocate for restorative justice practices and a critic of the sex offender registry, got into a heated argument after she called it "a public policy disaster in the making" during [her testimony](#).

"Please don't allow one sensational crime to turn good

intentions into bad policy,” Prizio said. “We all want to protect our vulnerable populations. OSJ stands ready to provide help to the committee in developing an effective solution.”

Prizio said there’s no “need to create a new bill every time there is an isolated high-profile incident” and that the bill is unfair to a class of people who already have had their rights “sucked dry by the system.”

Prizio endorsed Morelli’s suggestion of convening a work group to study the issue. . . .

[Read Mr. Altimari’s full piece here at the CTMirror.](#)