

# The Connecticut General Assembly



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**Contact: Giovanni Pinto**  
**(860) 240-8575**

## **SB9, IMPROVING HEALTH CARE ACCESS & FIGHTING THE OPIOID CRISIS, PASSES PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

Today, Senate Bill 9, which is designed to enhance access to physical, mental and behavioral health care, and if passed would work to fight the impacts of the opioid and fentanyl crisis, became one step closer to becoming law as the Public Health Committee voted to advance it. The bill, which next heads to the Senate for further consideration, is one of Senate Democrats' primary legislative priorities this year. The bill was adjusted by lawmakers before its passage Monday to remove threat of penalty for interfering with individuals receiving reproductive health care and to remove language from a pilot program creating "harm reduction centers" to ensure that project does not fall afoul of federal funding restrictions.

"Our state continues to experience challenges in ensuring equitable access to health care, an issue that we must continue to work to fight," said **State Senator Saud Anwar (D-South Windsor)**, Senate Chair of the Public Health Committee. "I'm proud that the Public Health Committee moved this key bill forward and that we are one step closer to better coverage across our state. This bill protects reproductive health. It establishes a pilot program and takes steps to reduce overdoses and connect those struggling with addiction with resources that can help them. It will make it easier for the field to find and retain staff. It's a strong, valuable piece of legislature that I hope will pay dividends once made law."

"As a Public Health Committee we remain committed to increasing access to care that is safe, effective and affordable," said **State Representative Cristin McCarthy-Vahey (D-Fairfield, Bridgeport)**, House Chair of the Public Health Committee. "Advocates and healthcare professionals alike have shared the importance of meeting people where they are when it comes to harm reduction and preventing deaths from opioids and substance use disorders. This bill not only increases the opportunity for harm reduction but takes other important steps to retain and increase our healthcare workforce. I commend Senator Anwar for his leadership on this legislation and look forward to working with the committee and stakeholders to pass this bill into law."

Among the proposed changes Senate Bill 9 would make to health care systems in Connecticut:

- The Commissioner of Social Services would adjust Medicaid reimbursement criteria to provide funding for same-day access to long-acting reversible contraceptives at federally qualified health centers.
- The state would establish a pilot program to establish three harm reduction centers in municipalities in the state; these centers would provide referrals to substance use disorder or

other mental health services to those individuals. It would also create an advisory committee monitoring these centers.

- The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services would develop and use an Opioid Antagonist Bulk Purchase Fund to aid municipal and organizational bulk purchases of opioid antagonists like Narcan at a discounted price.
- Opioid prescription practices would become more stringent, including prescriptions for opioid antagonists for patients at risk of abuse or overdose.
- State departments would establish and administer a personal care attendant career pathway program to aid the workforce of that field.
- Medical offices could not require medical professionals to complete non-compete disclosures, which could limit an individuals' ability to operate in that field.
- The process of receiving advanced practice registered nursing licenses would be eased for qualified applicants.

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