
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5544

AN ACT CONCERNING FEE WAIVERS FOR VETERANS ATTENDING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

SUMMARY

This bill expands the state's public higher education tuition waiver program for eligible veterans to include a student fee waiver. It requires the regional community-technical colleges, the Connecticut State Universities (CSUs), and UConn to waive any student fee amount in excess of the federal educational assistance received by the veteran, similar to the eligible veteran tuition waiver in current law. (The bill does not specify what constitutes "student fees"; presumably, these are fees such as student activity fees.)

Additionally, the bill adds student fee waivers to the state reimbursement calculation for community colleges, CSUs, and UConn. Under current law, these institutions receive an annual state reimbursement appropriation for the amount that eligible veteran tuition waivers exceed (1) 5% of tuition revenue for the community colleges and (2) 2.5% of tuition revenue for the CSUs and UConn. The bill extends the state reimbursement amount to include student waivers and tuition waivers, when the amount of these waivers exceeds the above specified percentages of tuition and student fee revenue for the respective institutions.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

BACKGROUND

Tuition Waivers for Veterans

By law, the state's public colleges and universities must waive tuition in excess of federal veterans' benefit via the post-9/11 GI bill

for eligible veterans who are accepted at an approved institution and live in the state at the time of the acceptance. The tuition waiver applies at the regional community-technical colleges, CSUS, and UConn and covers the cost of tuition for credit-bearing undergraduate and graduate programs. The law defines “tuition” as a direct charge for institutional programs, which is clearly delineated from other fees (CGS § 10a-26(a)(2)). It does not apply to other charges or fees, such as student activity fees and room and board (CGS §§ 10a-77(e), 10a-99(e) & 10a-105(f)).

This benefit applies to (1) wartime veterans and (2) veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or for bad conduct and have a “qualifying condition” (i.e., a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, or who have disclosed a military sexual trauma experience) (CGS § 27-103).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 22 Nay 0 (03/22/2021)