
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 343

AN ACT CONCERNING A MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY WORKING GROUP AND A GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN LICENSING, CERTIFICATION, REGISTRATION OR TUITION FEES.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) to establish a grant program, by January 1, 2023, to reimburse veterans and their apprenticeship program sponsors for certain occupational licensing, certification, and registration fees and tuition. It also (1) appropriates \$100,000 from the General Fund to DCP for the program for FY 23 and (2) requires DCP to establish the program in consultation with the Department of Labor (DOL) and Technical Education and Career System (TECS).

The bill also establishes a 15-member working group to reexamine the military occupational specialty task force's 2014 findings and resulting legislative changes and identify more ways to help veterans find jobs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022, except the provision establishing a working group is effective upon passage.

VETERAN OCCUPATIONAL FEE GRANT PROGRAM

The bill requires the DCP commissioner, in consultation with the DOL commissioner and TECS executive director, to start a grant program that allows veterans and apprenticeship programs that sponsor veterans to apply for reimbursement of certain fees they paid. (It is unclear if the reimbursements are available regardless of when the fees were paid or if they only apply for fees paid moving forward.)

Under it, veterans may apply for fees they paid to:

1. DCP for their (a) examinations, (b) initial licensing or certification, or (c) annual renewal fees for the five years after their initial licensing or certification; and
2. TECS for tuition, up to \$1,000.

Apprenticeship program sponsors may apply for fees they paid to:

1. DOL for veterans who participate in the apprenticeship program, and
2. TECS for tuition, up to \$1,000, on behalf of a veteran who participates in the sponsor's apprenticeship program.

The bill requires the DCP and DOL commissioners and TECS executive director to determine how applications must be submitted to the program. They must also submit a report to the Veterans' Affairs Committee, by January 1, 2024, and every six months after, on (1) the number of approved applications and total reimbursement amount and (2) recommendations for legislation to improve the grant program's administration.

Under the bill, a "veteran" is anyone discharged or released from active service in the U.S. Armed Forces honorably, under honorable conditions, or with an other than honorable (OTH) discharge based on a qualifying condition (i.e., diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, disclosed military sexual trauma, or determination that sexual orientation or gender identity or expression was more likely than not the primary reason for the OTH discharge).

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE WORKING GROUP

In 2013, the legislature established a military occupational specialty task force to study whether veterans' military training experience could satisfy state licensing training requirements, and required it to submit its findings to the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which it did in 2014 (SA 13-5). In response to the study, the legislature adopted legislation requiring various government entities to waive or modify certain

occupational, training, or educational requirements and fees for veterans with military experience or qualifications similar to those otherwise required (PA 14-131).

Working Group Membership

The working group the bill establishes includes the following members:

1. Department of Veterans Affairs commissioner, or his designee;
2. Military Department Adjutant General, or his designee;
3. Office of Military Affairs executive director, or his designee;
4. DOL, DCP, and Department of Education commissioners, or their designees;
5. Department of Higher Education Board of Regent’s president, or the president’s designee;
6. Office of Higher Education’s executive director, or his designee;
7. UConn Board of Trustees’ chairperson or the chairperson’s designee; and
8. six members, one each appointed by the House and Senate majority and minority leaders, Senate president pro tempore, and House speaker.

The bill requires appointing authorities to make initial appointments within 30 days after the bill’s passage and fill any vacancies. Under the bill, the House speaker’s and Senate president pro tempore’s appointees are the task force chairpersons. The chairpersons must schedule the first meeting, which must be held no later than 60 days after the bill’s passage.

Reporting & Termination

Under the bill, the working group must submit its findings and recommendations by January 1, 2023, to the Veterans’ Affairs

Committee. The working group terminates on that date or when it submits its report, whichever is later.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 16 Nay 0 (03/15/2022)