



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 370

January Session, 2023

Substitute House Bill No. 6841

House of Representatives, April 3, 2023

The Committee on Public Safety and Security reported through REP. BOYD of the 50th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) There is established a Fire
2 Service Youth Program Advisory Board. The board shall be within the
3 Office of State Fire Administrator for administrative purposes only. The
4 board shall consist of the following members:
- 5 (1) The director of fire training in the Office of State Fire
6 Administrator, who shall serve as chairperson of the board;
- 7 (2) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;
- 8 (3) The Labor Commissioner, or the commissioner's designee;
- 9 (4) The Chief Workforce Officer of the Office of Workforce Strategy,
10 or such officer's designee;
- 11 (5) The director of the Office of Emergency Medical Services within

12 the Department of Public Health, or the director's designee;

13 (6) The executive director of the Technical Education and Career
14 System, or such executive director's designee;

15 (7) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives,
16 one of whom has expertise in fire services;

17 (8) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of
18 whom has expertise in occupational safety;

19 (9) One appointed by the majority leader of the House of
20 Representatives, who has expertise in legal issues relating to firefighters
21 or emergency medical services;

22 (10) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, who has
23 expertise in public health in matters relating to firefighters or emergency
24 medical services;

25 (11) One appointed by the minority leader of the House of
26 Representatives;

27 (12) One appointed by the minority leader of the Senate; and

28 (13) One appointed by the Governor.

29 (b) The board shall:

30 (1) Advise the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control;

31 (2) Develop a standard curriculum for grades nine through twelve,
32 inclusive, emphasizing the importance of public safety and community
33 service, and a plan for public safety tracks for technical high schools to
34 offer to students, including specific tracks and certifications for
35 firefighting and emergency medical services;

36 (3) Introduce the curriculum and implement the public safety tracks
37 developed pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection as a pilot
38 program in one technical high school not later than July 1, 2025, and

39 make such curriculum and tracks available to other technical high
40 schools and other high schools;

41 (4) Coordinate state funding to technical high schools and other high
42 schools to provide such curriculum and tracks;

43 (5) Establish a training program for fire service instructors in
44 technical high schools and other high schools;

45 (6) Support fire departments, fire districts and other nonprofit entities
46 that provide or seek to provide cadet or explorer programs; and

47 (7) Expand and implement components of the United States Fire
48 Administration fire service apprenticeship program.

49 (c) In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and each fiscal year
50 thereafter, the board shall pay five thousand dollars to (1) each technical
51 high school or other high school that operates, or plans to operate in the
52 following fiscal year, a program with public safety tracks pursuant to
53 the curriculum developed under subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this
54 section, and (2) each fire department, fire district or other nonprofit
55 entity that operates, or plans to operate in the following fiscal year, a
56 cadet or explorer program.

57 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The Commissioner of Emergency
58 Services and Public Protection shall appoint a firefighter recruitment
59 and training coordinator in each emergency preparedness region
60 designated by the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland
61 Security within the Department of Emergency Services and Public
62 Protection. Each such coordinator shall (1) recruit individuals for careers
63 in firefighting or manage such recruitment programs, and (2) provide
64 training assistance to fire departments and, upon request of a fire
65 department, coordinate or conduct training programs.

66 Sec. 3. Section 7-323o of the general statutes is repealed and the
67 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

68 (a) There is established the position of State Fire Administrator who

69 shall be recommended by the Commission on Fire Prevention and
70 Control and appointed by the Commissioner of Emergency Services and
71 Public Protection and who shall: (1) Carry out the requirements of
72 section 7-323n; (2) administer federal funds and grants allocated to the
73 fire services of the state; (3) provide technical assistance and guidance
74 to fire fighting forces of any state or municipal agency; (4) develop a
75 centralized information and audiovisual library regarding fire
76 prevention and control; (5) accumulate, disseminate and analyze fire
77 prevention data; (6) recommend specifications of fire service materials
78 and equipment and assist in the purchasing thereof; (7) assist in mutual
79 aid coordination; (8) coordinate fire programs with those of the other
80 states; (9) assist in communications coordination; (10) establish and
81 maintain a fire service information program; and (11) review the
82 purchase of fire apparatus or equipment at state institutions, facilities
83 and properties and, on and after July 1, 1985, coordinate the training and
84 education of fire service personnel at such institutions, facilities and
85 properties. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to apply
86 to forest fire prevention and control programs administered by the
87 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection pursuant to
88 sections 23-33 to 23-57, inclusive.

89 (b) (1) The State Fire Administrator shall develop, or enter into an
90 agreement with a vendor to develop, facilities across the state that
91 provide opportunities for individuals to train for and take the candidate
92 physical ability test for firefighters throughout the year. The
93 administrator shall seek to develop such facilities at multiple locations
94 that are designed to improve opportunities for, and access to, training
95 and test taking, and shall give a preference to locations at regional fire
96 school sites. The administrator shall provide equipment for such
97 training and test taking at any regional fire school or state facility that
98 offers such training and test taking.

99 (2) The director of fire training within the Office of the State Fire
100 Administrator shall act as coordinator of such training and oversee such
101 training and testing facilities.

102 (c) The Office of the State Fire Administrator shall employ a full-time
103 youth program coordinator, who shall coordinate and oversee technical
104 high school and other high school curriculum and public safety track
105 programs developed pursuant to subsection (b) of section 1 of this act,
106 implement state standards and a best practices guide for such programs,
107 ensure the consistency and continuity of such programs and oversee the
108 hiring and training of program instructors.

109 (d) The Office of the State Fire Administrator shall employ a full-time
110 cadet or explorer program coordinator, who shall coordinate and
111 oversee cadet or explorer programs, implement state standards and a
112 best practices guide for such programs, encourage establishment and
113 expansion of such programs throughout the state and encourage the
114 expanded use of regional fire schools for such programs.

115 Sec. 4. Section 7-323p of the general statutes is repealed and the
116 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

117 (a) The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
118 shall (1) maintain and operate a state fire school that shall serve as the
119 training and education facility for the Commission on Fire Prevention
120 and Control, [and] (2) provide training and educational services in
121 accordance with the standards established pursuant to section 7-323l,
122 and (3) provide instructors and facilities sufficient to conduct training
123 for at least three classes of recruits at the state fire school each year. The
124 use of any hazardous material, as defined in section 29-307a, except a
125 virgin fuel, is prohibited in the simulation of any fire. The Department
126 of Emergency Services and Public Protection shall, in consultation with
127 the commission, fix fees for training and education programs and
128 sessions and for such other purposes deemed necessary for the
129 operation and support of the school. Such fees shall be used solely for
130 training and education purposes.

131 (b) The department may establish and maintain a state fire school
132 training and education extension account, which shall be a separate
133 account within the General Fund. The account shall contain any moneys
134 required by law to be deposited in the account. The account shall be

135 used for the operation of such training and education programs and
136 sessions as said department may establish, for the purchase of such
137 equipment as is required for use in the operation of such programs and
138 sessions, and, within available funding, for (1) reimbursement to
139 municipalities and municipal fire departments for one-half of the costs
140 of Firefighter I certification and recruit training of municipal volunteer
141 and paid fire service personnel, and (2) reimbursement to state agencies
142 for one-half of the costs of Firefighter I certification and recruit training
143 of state agency fire service personnel. All proceeds derived from the
144 operation of the training and education programs and sessions shall be
145 deposited in the General Fund and shall be credited to and become a
146 part of the resources of the account. All direct expenses incurred in the
147 conduct of the training, certification and education programs and
148 sessions shall be charged, and any payments of interest and principal of
149 bonds or any sums transferable to any fund for the payment of interest
150 and principal of bonds and any cost of equipment for such operations
151 may be charged, against the account on order of the State Comptroller.
152 Any balance of receipts above expenditures shall remain in the account
153 to be used by the department for training and education programs and
154 sessions, and for the acquisition, as provided by section 4b-21, alteration
155 and repairs of real property for educational facilities, except such sums
156 as may be required to be transferred from time to time to any fund for
157 the redemption of bonds and payment of interest on bonds, provided
158 repairs, alterations or additions to educational facilities costing fifty
159 thousand dollars or less shall require the approval of the Commissioner
160 of Administrative Services, and capital projects costing over fifty
161 thousand dollars shall require the approval of the General Assembly or,
162 when the General Assembly is not in session, of the Finance Advisory
163 Committee.

164 (c) The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection may
165 establish and maintain a state fire school auxiliary services account,
166 which shall be a separate account within the General Fund. The account
167 shall be used for the operation, maintenance and repair of auxiliary
168 service facilities and for such other auxiliary activities of the state fire
169 school as said department determines. The proceeds of such activities

170 shall be deposited in the General Fund and shall be credited to and
171 become a part of the resources of the account. All direct expenses of
172 operation, maintenance and repair of facilities, food services and other
173 auxiliary activities shall be charged, and any payments of interest and
174 principal of bonds or any sums transferable to any fund for the payment
175 of interest and principal of bonds and any cost of equipment for such
176 operations may be charged, against the account on order of the State
177 Comptroller. Any balance of receipts above expenditures shall remain
178 in the account to be used for the improvement and extension of such
179 activities, except such sums as may be required to be transferred from
180 time to time to any fund for the redemption of bonds and payment of
181 interest on bonds, provided repairs, alterations or additions to auxiliary
182 service facilities costing fifty thousand dollars or less shall require the
183 approval of the Commissioner of Administrative Services, and capital
184 projects costing over fifty thousand dollars shall require the approval of
185 the General Assembly or, when the General Assembly is not in session,
186 of the Finance Advisory Committee. The department, with the approval
187 of the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Finance
188 Advisory Committee, may borrow from the resources of the General
189 Fund at any time such sum or sums as it deems advisable, to establish
190 or continue auxiliary services activities, such sums to be repaid in
191 accordance with such schedule as the Secretary of the Office of Policy
192 and Management shall establish.

193 (d) The compensation provided by the department to a fire service
194 instructor to provide fire service training shall be comparable to
195 compensation provided by the Police Officer Standards and Training
196 Council to a law enforcement instructor for police officer training.

197 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) There is established a
198 paramedic candidate scholarship program administered by the
199 Department of Public Health. The program shall provide scholarships
200 to individuals receiving training to become licensed as a paramedic
201 pursuant to section 20-206ll of the general statutes.

202 (b) Not later than January 1, 2024, the department shall develop a

203 policy concerning the administration of the scholarship program. Such
204 policy shall include, but need not be limited to, provisions regarding (1)
205 eligibility criteria, and (2) the payment and distribution of the
206 scholarships.

207 (c) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, and each fiscal year
208 thereafter, the department shall award scholarships in accordance with
209 the provisions of this section and the policy developed pursuant to
210 subsection (b) of this section.

211 (d) The department may accept gifts, grants and donations from any
212 source, public or private, for the paramedic candidate scholarship
213 program.

214 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) No fire department shall deny
215 employment as a firefighter to a prospective employee solely on the
216 basis of the prospective employee's status as a noncitizen of the United
217 States, provided such prospective employee is lawfully admitted for
218 permanent residence of the United States under federal law and
219 regulations.

220 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The Connecticut Housing Finance
221 Authority shall develop and administer a program of mortgage
222 assistance to uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments
223 in the state. Such assistance shall be available to an eligible firefighter
224 for the purchase of a house as such firefighter's principal residence in
225 the community served by such firefighter. In making mortgage
226 assistance available under the program, the authority shall utilize down
227 payment assistance or any other appropriate housing subsidies. The
228 terms of any mortgage assistance shall allow the mortgagee to realize a
229 reasonable portion of the equity gain upon sale of the mortgaged
230 property.

231 Sec. 8. Subsection (d) of section 10a-77 of the general statutes is
232 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
233 *2023*):

234 (d) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition at any of
235 the regional community-technical colleges (1) for any dependent child
236 of a person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to
237 be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in
238 such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted
239 for admission to such institution and is a resident of the state at the time
240 such child is accepted for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the
241 provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in
242 section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in
243 section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in
244 time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military
245 service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to such
246 institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is
247 accepted for admission to such institution, (3) for any resident of the
248 state sixty-two years of age or older, provided, at the end of the regular
249 registration period, there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number
250 of students other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to
251 this subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to
252 enroll and there is space available in such course after accommodating
253 all such students, (4) for any student attending the Connecticut State
254 Police Academy who is enrolled in a law enforcement program at said
255 academy offered in coordination with a regional community-technical
256 college which accredits courses taken in such program, (5) for any active
257 member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has
258 been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's
259 designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled
260 or accepted for admission to such institution on a full-time or part-time
261 basis in an undergraduate degree-granting program, (6) for any
262 dependent child of a (A) police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or
263 supernumerary or auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in
264 section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal
265 employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in
266 the line of duty, (7) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child
267 or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of
268 this state, (8) for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was

269 killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and
270 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, [and] (9) for any resident of
271 the state who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who
272 was killed in action while performing active military duty with the
273 armed forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and
274 who was a resident of this state, (10) for a uniformed member of a paid
275 or volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such
276 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
277 two years, (11) for any dependent child of a uniformed member of a paid
278 or volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such
279 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
280 five years, and (12) for any student attending the state fire school, who
281 is enrolled in a program at said school offered in coordination with a
282 regional community-technical college that accredits courses taken in
283 such program. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance
284 with the provisions of this subsection also receives educational
285 reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the
286 amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of
287 the National Guard described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall
288 be given the same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in
289 registering for courses at regional community-technical colleges.
290 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this
291 subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less than one
292 year.

293 Sec. 9. Subsection (d) of section 10a-99 of the general statutes is
294 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
295 *2023*):

296 (d) Said board shall waive the payment of tuition fees at the
297 Connecticut State University System (1) for any dependent child of a
298 person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to be
299 missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such
300 armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for
301 admission to such institution and is a resident of the state at the time
302 such child is accepted for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the

303 provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in
304 section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in
305 section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in
306 time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military
307 service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to such
308 institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is
309 accepted for admission to such institution, (3) for any resident of the
310 state sixty-two years of age or older who has been accepted for
311 admission to such institution, provided (A) such resident is enrolled in
312 a degree-granting program, or (B) at the end of the regular registration
313 period, there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students
314 other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this
315 subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to enroll
316 and there is space available in such course after accommodating all such
317 students, (4) for any student attending the Connecticut Police Academy
318 who is enrolled in a law enforcement program at said academy offered
319 in coordination with the university which accredits courses taken in
320 such program, (5) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or
321 Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General
322 or such Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of
323 the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to such
324 institution on a full-time or part-time basis in an undergraduate or
325 graduate degree-granting program, (6) for any dependent child of a (A)
326 police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or
327 auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or
328 member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D)
329 state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7)
330 for any resident of this state who is a dependent child or surviving
331 spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of the state, (8)
332 for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a
333 multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and
334 Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, [and] (9) for any resident of the state
335 who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was
336 killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed
337 forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was

338 a resident of this state, (10) for a uniformed member of a paid or
339 volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such
340 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
341 two years, (11) for any dependent child of a uniformed member of a paid
342 or volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such
343 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
344 five years, and (12) for any student attending the state fire school, who
345 is enrolled in a program at said school offered in coordination with the
346 university that accredits courses taken in such program. If any person
347 who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions of this
348 subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an employer,
349 such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such educational
350 reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National Guard
351 described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall be given the same
352 status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for courses
353 at Connecticut state universities. Notwithstanding the provisions of
354 section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in this state"
355 includes domicile for less than one year.

356 Sec. 10. Subsection (e) of section 10a-105 of the general statutes is
357 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
358 *2023*):

359 (e) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition fees at
360 The University of Connecticut (1) for any dependent child of a person
361 whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to be missing
362 in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed
363 forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission
364 to The University of Connecticut and is a resident of the state at the time
365 such child is accepted for admission to said institution, (2) subject to the
366 provisions of subsection (f) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in
367 section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in
368 section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in
369 time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military
370 service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to said
371 institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is

372 accepted for admission to said institution, (3) for any resident of the state
373 sixty-two years of age or older who has been accepted for admission to
374 said institution, provided (A) such resident is enrolled in a degree-
375 granting program, or (B) at the end of the regular registration period,
376 there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students other
377 than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to
378 offer the course in which such resident intends to enroll and there is
379 space available in such course after accommodating all such students,
380 (4) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or Air National
381 Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General or such
382 Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of the guard,
383 and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to said institution on a full-
384 time or part-time basis in an undergraduate or graduate degree-
385 granting program, (5) for any dependent child of a (A) police officer, as
386 defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or auxiliary police officer,
387 (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire
388 company, (C) municipal employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in
389 section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (6) for any resident of the state
390 who is the dependent child or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist
391 victim who was a resident of the state, (7) for any dependent child of a
392 resident of the state who was killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the
393 intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005,
394 [and] (8) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or
395 surviving spouse of a person who was killed in action while performing
396 active military duty with the armed forces of the United States on or
397 after September 11, 2001, and who was a resident of this state, (9) for a
398 uniformed member of a paid or volunteer fire department, who, as
399 documented by the chief of such department, has served as such a
400 member in the state for not less than two years, and (10) for any
401 dependent child of a uniformed member of a paid or volunteer fire
402 department, who, as documented by the chief of such department, has
403 served as such a member in the state for not less than five years. If any
404 person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions
405 of this subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an
406 employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such

407 educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National
408 Guard described in subdivision (4) of this subsection shall be given the
409 same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for
410 courses at The University of Connecticut. Notwithstanding the
411 provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in
412 this state" includes domicile for less than one year.

413 Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) As used in this section:

414 (1) "Accrued service award" means the total value, as of a given date,
415 of a participant's program account.

416 (2) "Bona fide volunteer" has the same meaning as in Section 457(e) of
417 the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent corresponding
418 internal revenue code of the United States, as amended from time to
419 time.

420 (3) "Commission" means the State Retirement Commission.

421 (4) "Eligible firefighter" means a firefighter who (A) is a bona fide
422 volunteer performing qualified services in a volunteer fire company or
423 department, and (B) is not otherwise earning credit for such qualified
424 service as a participant in any other length of service award program,
425 pension system operating pursuant to subparagraph (A) of subdivision
426 (5) of subsection (c) of section 7-148 of the general statutes or any other
427 comparable program.

428 (5) "Participant" means an eligible firefighter who participates in the
429 program.

430 (6) "Program account" means a separate account maintained for each
431 participant reflecting applicable contributions, applicable forfeitures,
432 investment income or loss and administrative and investment expenses
433 allocated to each participant and paid from the Volunteer Firefighter
434 Length of Service Award Program Trust Fund, established under
435 subsection (c) of this section.

436 (7) "Qualified service" has the same meaning as provided in Section

437 457(e)(11) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent
438 corresponding internal revenue code of the United States, as amended
439 from time to time.

440 (b) The State Retirement Commission, in consultation with the
441 Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the State Fire
442 Administrator, shall establish a volunteer firefighter length of service
443 award program. The State Retirement Commission may contract with
444 third parties to provide services for such program.

445 (c) There is established a Volunteer Firefighter Length of Service
446 Award Program Trust Fund. The fund shall contain any moneys
447 required or permitted by law to be deposited in the fund and may apply
448 for and accept gifts, grants or donations from public or private sources
449 to enable the trust fund to carry out its objectives. Investment earnings
450 credited to the assets of the fund shall become part of the assets of the
451 fund. The fund shall be held in trust separate and apart from all other
452 moneys, funds and accounts. Any balance remaining in the fund at the
453 end of any fiscal year shall be carried forward in the fund for the fiscal
454 year next succeeding. The fund shall be used to make payments as
455 provided in this section and for administrative expenses related to the
456 provisions of this section.

457 (d) Not later than January 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, each
458 volunteer fire company or department shall submit to the commission a
459 list of eligible firefighters and the amount of service credit each such
460 firefighter has earned with such department, on a form and in a manner
461 as determined by the commission.

462 (e) (1) Not later than April 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the
463 commission shall determine which eligible firefighters satisfy the
464 service credit requirements established pursuant to regulations adopted
465 in accordance with subsection (k) of this section to be participants in the
466 program, and the amount of credits applicable to each such participant.

467 (2) An eligible firefighter may decline to become a participant in the
468 program if such firefighter files with the commission, prior to such

469 firefighter satisfying such service credit requirements to become a
470 participant in the program, an irrevocable waiver of participation that
471 is signed by the eligible firefighter and the chief of the volunteer fire
472 company or department of which such firefighter is a member.

473 (3) A participant shall receive service credit for service as an eligible
474 firefighter before, on and after the effective date of this section. Service
475 credit earned by a participant shall never be forfeited.

476 (f) Not later than July 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the
477 commission shall credit a length of service award, in an amount
478 determined by the regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (k) of this
479 section, to the program account of each participant who the commission
480 determines qualifies for a length of service award pursuant to the
481 service credit requirements established by such regulations. No such
482 award may exceed the limit provided in Section 457(e)(11) of the
483 Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent corresponding
484 internal revenue code of the United States, as amended from time to
485 time.

486 (g) (1) A participant's accrued service award becomes vested once
487 such participant has five years of service credit, as determined pursuant
488 to regulations adopted under subsection (k) of this section.

489 (2) If a participant has not been an eligible firefighter for thirty-six
490 consecutive months and such participant's accrued service award has
491 not become vested, such accrued service award shall be forfeited and
492 deposited in the Volunteer Firefighter Length of Service Award
493 Program Trust Fund.

494 (h) The commission shall pay each participant such participant's
495 accrued service award when the participant:

496 (1) Becomes vested pursuant to subsection (g) of this section and has
497 attained the age of sixty-five years or over;

498 (2) Has twenty years of service credit, provided the participant may,
499 prior to attaining such twenty years of service credit, file a written

500 election with the commission to defer payment of the accrued service
501 award until the participant attains the age of sixty-five;

502 (3) Is vested and has not been an eligible firefighter for at least thirty-
503 six consecutive months; or

504 (4) Has been determined to be totally and permanently disabled by
505 the United States Social Security Administration, the Workers'
506 Compensation Commission or any other entity approved by the State
507 Retirement Commission.

508 (i) If a participant is paid such participant's accrued service award
509 pursuant to subsection (h) of this section and subsequently qualifies for
510 a length of service award at any other time pursuant to the provisions
511 of this section and regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (k) of this
512 section, the commission shall pay such service award directly to such
513 participant.

514 (j) If a participant dies prior to receiving such participant's accrued
515 service award pursuant to subsection (h) of this section or a length of
516 service award pursuant to subsection (i) of this section, the commission
517 shall pay such award to any beneficiary the participant has designated
518 on a form and in a manner prescribed by the commission.

519 (k) Not later than January 1, 2024, the State Retirement Commission,
520 in consultation with the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control
521 and the State Fire Administrator, shall adopt regulations, in accordance
522 with the provisions of chapter 54 of the general statutes, to implement
523 the volunteer firefighter length of service award program. Such
524 regulations shall include, but need not be limited to, provisions
525 regarding (1) earning service credits and determining the amount of
526 awards, which may include a point-based system that requires earning
527 points for responding to calls, attending meetings and trainings or other
528 factors, (2) documentation for earning such credits, including a system
529 to permit volunteer fire companies and departments to comply with the
530 requirements of subsection (d) of this section, and (3) contesting
531 determinations of service credits awarded to a participant.

532 Sec. 12. Section 3-13c of the general statutes is repealed and the
533 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

534 Trust funds as used in sections 3-13 to 3-13e, inclusive, and 3-31b shall
535 be construed to include Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement
536 Fund A, Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement Fund B,
537 Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund, Family and Medical Leave
538 Insurance Trust Fund, State's Attorneys' Retirement Fund, Teachers'
539 Annuity Fund, Teachers' Pension Fund, Teachers' Survivorship and
540 Dependency Fund, School Fund, State Employees Retirement Fund, the
541 Hospital Insurance Fund, Policemen and Firemen Survivor's Benefit
542 Fund, Volunteer Firefighter Length of Service Award Program Trust
543 Fund, any trust fund described in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of
544 section 7-450 that is administered, held or invested by the State
545 Treasurer and all other trust funds administered, held or invested by the
546 State Treasurer.

547 Sec. 13. (*Effective from passage*) The State Retirement Commission shall
548 develop a new tier or classification within the municipal employees'
549 retirement system for public safety professionals. Such tier or
550 classification shall (1) take into consideration the tiered classifications of
551 firefighters developed pursuant to section 14 of this act, and (2) permit
552 an individual employed as a firefighter to retire from such position with
553 one participating municipality and accept employment as a firefighter
554 with another participating municipality and be eligible for retirement
555 benefits from such other municipality. The commission may consult
556 with the Commission on Fire Prevention Control, the State Fire
557 Administrator and any other entities deemed appropriate in developing
558 such new tier or classification. Not later than January 1, 2024, the
559 commission shall report to the joint standing committee of the General
560 Assembly having cognizance of matter relating to public safety and
561 security, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the
562 general statutes, regarding the terms and benefits that will be applicable
563 to such tier or classification and legislation necessary to implement such
564 tier or classification.

565 Sec. 14. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commission on Fire Prevention
566 and Control shall conduct a study of the different levels of training and
567 certification of firefighters and the benefits available to firefighters and
568 make recommendations regarding benefits to provide incentives to
569 encourage individuals to begin a career in firefighting and encourage
570 firefighters to continue in their careers in firefighting. As part of such
571 study, the commission shall:

572 (1) Develop a tiered classification of firefighters based on various
573 factors the commission deems relevant, which may include, but need
574 not be limited to, a firefighter's certification and level of training, years
575 of experience, responsibilities, including any supervisory, executive,
576 support or administrative responsibilities and status as an employed or
577 volunteer firefighter, and the commission may include one of more
578 classifications for individuals training to become a firefighter;

579 (2) Identify existing benefits available to firefighters, including the
580 volunteer firefighter length of service award program established under
581 section 11 of this act and the retirement tier developed pursuant to
582 section 13 of this act, propose changes to any such benefits and identify
583 new benefits that could encourage recruitment and retention of
584 employed and volunteer firefighters;

585 (3) Consider as a factor for a firefighter's eligibility for any one or
586 more benefits identified under subdivision (2) of this subsection,
587 whether the firefighter (A) adheres to standard 1582 of the National Fire
588 Protection Association on comprehensive occupational medical
589 program for fire departments, or any subsequent standard by such
590 association that is applicable to fire departments, and (B) does not use
591 any tobacco products; and

592 (4) Consider whether eligibility for any one or more benefits
593 identified under subdivision (2) of this subsection should be determined
594 based on a firefighter's inclusion in a specific classification tier, as
595 developed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in order to
596 provide incentives that encourage individuals to begin a career in
597 firefighting and encourage firefighters to continue in their careers in

598 firefighting.

599 (b) Not later than January 1, 2024, the commission shall report the
600 results of the study, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a
601 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General
602 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety and
603 security.

604 Sec. 15. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) The Department of Public Health
605 shall establish a pilot program to provide emergency services
606 organizations, as defined in section 19a-904 of the general statutes, with
607 (1) equipment capable of identifying individuals at high risk of cardiac
608 arrest, (2) an early detection system capable of identifying individuals
609 who are at low risk of cardiac arrest before such individuals experience
610 critical cardiac issues, or (3) both such equipment and system. Not later
611 than October 1, 2023, the department shall (A) post in a conspicuous
612 place on the department's Internet web site a description of the program,
613 including, but not limited to, eligibility criteria and the application
614 process for such program, and (B) notify each emergency services
615 organization of the opportunity to apply for participation in such
616 program.

617 (b) Not later than January 1, 2025, the commissioner shall, in
618 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,
619 report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
620 cognizance of matters relating to public safety and security on the result
621 of such pilot program and recommendations as to whether to continue
622 or expand such program.

623 Sec. 16. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The sum of five hundred thousand
624 dollars is appropriated to the Department of Emergency Services and
625 Public Protection from the General Fund, for the fiscal years ending June
626 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025, for the purpose of providing funds, in
627 addition to any reimbursement provided pursuant to subsection (b) of
628 section 7-323p of the general statutes, as amended by this act, to reduce
629 the cost to trainees and fire departments of attendance at the state fire
630 school.

631 Sec. 17. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The sum of five hundred thousand
 632 dollars is appropriated to the Department of Emergency Services and
 633 Public Protection from the General Fund, for the fiscal years ending June
 634 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025, for the purpose of providing funds to reduce
 635 the cost to trainees and fire departments of attendance at regional fire
 636 schools.

637 Sec. 18. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The sum of seven hundred fifty
 638 thousand dollars is appropriated to the Department of Public Health
 639 from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for the
 640 purposes of providing scholarships pursuant to section 5 of this act.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	7-323o
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	7-323p
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	10a-77(d)
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	10a-99(d)
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	10a-105(e)
Sec. 11	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 12	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	3-13c
Sec. 13	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 14	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 15	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 16	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 17	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 18	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 3(b)(1), "for individuals" was inserted for clarity; in Section 3(c), "developed pursuant to subsection (b) of section 1 of this act" was inserted for clarity; in Section 4(d), "pay" was changed to "compensation" for internal consistency; in Section 11(e)(1), "and annually thereafter," was inserted for internal consistency; in Section

11(h), subdivisions were rewritten for clarity; in Section 11(i) "service award" was changed to "length of service award" and "pursuant to the provisions of this section and regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (k) of this section" was inserted for clarity; in Section 11(j) "service award" was changed to "length of service award" for clarity; in Section 14(a)(3)(A), "National Fire Protection Association standard 1582" was changed to "standard 1582 of the National Fire Protection Association" for consistency with standard drafting conventions; and in Section 15, "Commissioner" was changed to "Department" and "Department of Public Health" was changed to "department" for internal consistency.

PS *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 24 \$	FY 25 \$
Resources of the General Fund	GF - Appropriation	1 million	1.75 million
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	GF - Cost	1.2 million	746,000
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	GF - Savings	26,000	26,000
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	GF - Potential Cost	See Below	See Below
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	GF - Potential Revenue Gain	See Below	See Below
Higher Education Constituent Units	Tuition Funds - Revenue Loss	Potential Significant	Potential Significant
Public Health, Dept.	GF - Cost	188,225	973,921
Public Health, Dept.	GF - Cost	See Below	See Below
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	270,450	323,399
Comptroller	GF - Cost	See Below	See Below
Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA)	Resources of CHFA - Cost	Potential	Potential

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 24 \$	FY 25 \$
Various Municipalities	Potential Revenue Gain	See Below	See Below
All Municipalities	Potential Savings	See Below	See Below
All Municipalities	Potential Cost	See Below	See Below

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 42.82% of payroll in FY 24.

Explanation

The bill makes numerous changes designed to help recruit and retain people in firefighting and emergency medical services (EMS) careers, resulting in a cost to the state of at least \$2.6 million in FY 24 and \$3.0 million in FY 25 as well as the various other impacts described below.

Section 1 establishes a Fire Service Youth Program Advisory Board within the Office of State Fire Administrator in the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, (DESPP) and requires the board to distribute \$5,000 to each high school and fire department that adopts its programming. It is expected that at least 24 programs throughout the state will be eligible to receive these funds in FY 24 and FY 25, resulting in a cost to the state of at least \$120,000 each year. The board is also required to develop and implement a standard curriculum for high schools addressing public safety and community services and a plan for public safety tracks in technical high schools, including firefighting and EMS certification. Consultant costs and training costs required to develop and implement the curriculum and tracks are not expected to exceed \$100,000 in FY 24.

Section 1 also results in a potential revenue gain to municipalities of \$5,000 for each fire department and high school that implements the board's programming.

Section 2 requires DESPP to hire a firefighter recruitment and training coordinator in each of the state's five emergency preparedness regions, resulting in a cost of \$405,540 in FY 24 and \$414,449 in FY 25. The associated fringe benefits for these positions will result in a cost to the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) of \$152,242 in FY 24 and \$156,048 in FY 25. The starting salary for this position² is \$71,108, with an associated fringe benefits cost \$30,448. There is also an estimated cost of \$50,000 for equipment and training expenses each year.

² The salary of the firefighter recruitment and training coordinator is expected to be comparable with that of a Fire Academy Trainer.

Section 3 requires the State Fire Administrator to develop facilities to assist in training and testing for the candidate physical ability test (CPAT). It is anticipated that five new facilities will be created across the state and each one will cost a minimum of \$76,130 in equipment costs, resulting in a total one-time cost of \$380,650 in FY 24. Such equipment for CPAT testing includes helmets, gloves, vest weights, weighted manikins, and machinery designed to mimic fire rescue scenarios. Maintenance and replacement of damaged equipment is expected to cost up to \$25,000 in each year thereafter.

Section 3 also requires DESPP to hire two program coordinators to oversee the programming implemented pursuant to section 1, resulting in a cost to DESPP of \$182,832 in FY 24 and \$186,903 and a cost to OSC of \$69,725 in FY 24 and \$71,468 in FY 25 for associated fringe benefits. The starting salary for this position³ is \$81,416, with an associated fringe benefits cost \$34,862. There is also an estimated cost of \$20,000 for equipment and training expenses each year

Section 4 requires that a fire service instructor's compensation be comparable to that of a law enforcement instructor, which may reduce the compensation that some fire service instructors receive, resulting in estimated savings of \$26,000 to DESPP in FY 24 and FY 25. Currently, all law enforcement instructors are compensated at an hourly rate of \$20, whereas there are three levels of fire service instructors, with Instructor I receiving \$20 per hour, and Instructor II and Instructor III receiving hourly rates of \$24 and \$26, respectively.

This section also requires DESPP to conduct at least three classes at the state fire school each year, which can result in a potential cost or potential revenue gain depending on the number of students in each class. Currently, DESPP conducts two classes per year with attendance ranging from approximately 30 to 70 students. If there are less than about 55 students enrolled, tuition costs will generally not cover the cost of running the class. If greater, there is a potential revenue gain from

³ The salary of the youth program coordinator and cadet or explorer program coordinator is expected to be comparable with that of a Lead Fire Academy Trainer.

tuition costs. The costs of running a class range from \$285,378 to \$428,619, and the tuition revenue per class can range from \$224,550 to \$523,950.

Section 5 requires the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish a paramedic candidate scholarship program, resulting in a cost to the agency of \$35,079 in FY 24 and \$143,822 in FY 25, and a cost of \$15,021 in FY 24 and \$61,585 in FY 25 for associated fringe benefits. DPH costs in FY 24 reflect the salaries of a Health Program Associate (HPA), and a Health Program Assistant 1, for a quarter of the fiscal year to implement the paramedic scholarship program. FY 25 costs to DPH reflect annualized salaries. **Section 18** appropriates \$750,000 to DPH for paramedic candidate scholarships in FY 25.

Section 6 prohibits fire departments from denying employment to lawful resident noncitizens, resulting in no fiscal impact to the state or municipalities.

Section 7 results in potential costs beginning in FY 24 to the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), from the quasi-public's own resources, associated with developing, marketing, and providing a program of mortgage assistance to uniformed members of fire departments. Costs for providing such mortgage assistance are not anticipated to be substantial but would depend on: (1) the number of firefighters assisted and (2) the type of assistance provided.

CHFA has various existing programs that could help firefighters purchase a house where they work, including the First Time Homebuyers Program, the Down Payment Assistance Program, and the Time to Own Forgivable Down Payment Assistance Program, the latter two of which are both supported with state bond funding. Given the low utilization rate of CHFA's other occupation-specific mortgage assistance programs, the bill is not anticipated to materially change the

rate of spending.⁴

Sections 8-10 result in a potentially significant revenue loss beginning in FY 24 to the higher education constituent units, associated with waiving tuition for certain firefighters and their dependents, along with particular fire school students. The tuition waivers will be available to: 1) uniformed members of fire departments who have served for at least two years in the state, 2) dependent children of uniformed members of fire departments who have served for at least five years in the state, and 3) students attending the state fire school who are enrolled in a program offered together with a community college or state university that accredits courses in the program.

There are an estimated 26,800 paid and volunteer firefighters in Connecticut. It is unknown how many individuals will be eligible for the tuition waivers and take advantage of it, or which constituent unit they would choose to attend. The scope of the revenue loss will vary based on the number of waivers and the institution waiving tuition. For example, 500 additional tuition waivers at UConn results in a revenue loss of approximately \$8.2 million annually while 1,000 additional community college waivers results in a revenue loss of approximately \$4.2 million annually. To the extent that some of the waiver beneficiaries enrolling in Connecticut State Universities and Colleges institutions might not have otherwise attended, these institutions may experience higher fee and other revenue (e.g., room and board) due to the bill. The exact number of additional waivers that would occur because of the bill is unknown, but the revenue loss to the constituent units may be significant.

⁴ Out of the 1,610 first mortgages originated through CHFA in 2022, zero were under the Police Homeownership Program, 17 were under the Teachers Mortgage Assistance Program, and 12 were under the Military Program.

Examples of Tuition Waiver Value, FY 24			
# of Students	UConn	CSUs	Community Colleges
<i>Per-Student Value of Tuition Waiver, FY 24</i>	16,332	6,470	4,176
100	1,633,200	647,000	417,600
500	8,166,000	3,235,000	2,088,000
1,000	16,332,000	6,470,000	4,176,000

Sections 11-12 may result in start-up costs to the State Comptroller to establish a volunteer firefighter length of service award program and trust fund. The State Retirement Commission may contract with a third party to administer this system. The fund will be used to make payments towards the administrative costs of the program.

Section 13 may result in significant costs to the State Retirement Commission in establishing a new tier in the retirement system. The bill can also result in costs to participating municipalities to the extent of the employer contributions set by the retirement commission to develop the new tier in the municipal employees' retirement system.

Section 14 requires the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control in DESPP to conduct a study on firefighter training, certification, and benefits, not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact to the state.

Section 15 requires DPH to establish a pilot program by 10/1/23 to provide emergency services organizations with: (1) equipment capable of identifying individuals at high risk of cardiac arrest, (2) an early detection system capable of identifying individuals who are at low risk of cardiac arrest before such individuals experience critical cardiac issues, or (3) both such equipment and system. A Senior Healthcare Technology Consultant is needed, at a cost to DPH of approximately \$75,000 in FY 24, to research and identify what, if any, equipment is

available to assist emergency services in identifying individuals at high risk for cardiac arrest and for identifying people at low risk before they have a critical cardiac event, and the cost of this equipment, which is currently unknown. A HPA is also needed to work with the consultant on developing the pilot program. The position will also manage the program. The cost for HPA salary is \$78,146 in FY 24 and \$80,099 in FY 25. Associated fringe benefit costs are \$33,462 in FY 24 and \$34,298 in FY 25.

Section 16 appropriates \$500,000 to DESPP in FY 24 and FY 25 to reduce the cost of attending the state fire school, resulting in the same cost to the state and potential savings to various municipalities in each year.

Section 17 appropriates \$500,000 to DESPP in FY 24 and FY 25 to reduce the cost of attending regional fire schools, resulting in the same cost to the state and potential savings to various municipalities in each year.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of grants administered, tuition waivers granted, and inflation.

The appropriations listed in sections 16 through 18 do not continue beyond FY 25.

OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6841

AN ACT CONCERNING FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

SUMMARY

This bill makes numerous changes designed to help recruit and retain people in firefighting and emergency medical services (EMS) careers. Principally, the bill:

1. establishes a 15-member Fire Service Youth Program Advisory Board to, among other things, develop a high school curriculum on the importance of public safety and community service, create a plan for public safety tracks at technical high schools, implement the tracks in one technical high school, and make it available to other schools (§ 1);
2. requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) commissioner to appoint a firefighter recruitment and training coordinator in each emergency preparedness region to (a) recruit people for firefighting careers and (b) give training assistance to fire departments (§ 2);
3. requires the State Fire Administrator to develop facilities across the state where people can train for and take the firefighter physical ability test (§ 3);
4. requires DESPP to provide sufficient instructors and facilities at the state fire school to train at least three recruit classes per year (§ 4);
5. requires DESPP to pay fire service instructors doing fire service training at a rate that is comparable to that the Police Officer

Standards and Training Council (POST) pays law enforcement officers doing police officer training (§ 4);

6. establishes a paramedic candidate scholarship program administered by the Department of Public Health (DPH) to give scholarships to people training to become licensed paramedics; and appropriates \$750,000 to DPH for FY 25 to fund these scholarships (§§ 5 & 18);
7. bars fire departments from denying prospective firefighters employment based solely on their status as a lawful permanent resident noncitizen (§ 6);
8. requires the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to develop and administer a mortgage assistance program for uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments (§ 7);
9. provides tuition waivers (a) at the state's colleges and universities for paid or volunteer firefighters with at least two years' service and the dependent children of paid or volunteer firefighters with at least five years' service and (b) for anyone enrolled the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities or community colleges that is attending the state fire school as part of a program offered in coordination with the college or university (§§ 8-10);
10. requires the State Retirement Commission to establish a volunteer firefighter length of service award program (LOSAP) (§§ 11 & 12);
11. requires the State Retirement Commission to develop a new tier within the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) for public safety professionals (§ 13);
12. requires the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to study the different firefighter training and certification levels and firefighter benefits and recommend changes to recruit and retain firefighters (§ 14);

13. requires the DPH commissioner to establish a pilot program to provide emergency services organizations with specified equipment and systems for detecting critical cardiac issues (§ 15);
14. appropriates \$500,000 to DESPP for FYs 24 and 25 to reduce the cost to trainees and fire departments for attending the state fire school (§ 16); and
15. appropriates \$500,000 to DESPP for FYs 24 and 25 to reduce the cost to trainees and fire departments for attending regional fire schools (§ 17).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023, except the provisions on MERS and tiered firefighter classifications are effective upon passage.

§§ 1 & 3 — FIRE SERVICE YOUTH PROGRAM ADVISORY BOARD

Membership

Under the bill, the Fire Service Youth Program Advisory Board is comprised of the following members:

1. Office of State Fire Administrator's fire training director, who must serve as the board's chairperson;
2. education and labor commissioners or their designees;
3. Office of Workforce Strategy's chief workforce officer or designee;
4. DPH's Office of Emergency Medical Services director or designee;
5. Technical Education and Career System's executive director or designee;
6. two members appointed by the House speaker, including one fire service expert;
7. two members appointed by the Senate president pro tempore, including one occupational safety expert;

8. one member appointed by the House majority leader with expertise in firefighter or EMS-related legal issues;
9. one member appointed by the Senate majority leader with expertise in firefighter or EMS-related public health matters; and
10. one member appointed by each of the House and Senate minority leaders and governor.

The board is within the Office of State Fire Administrator for administrative purposes only.

Duties

The bill requires the board to do the following:

1. advise the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control;
2. develop a (a) standard curriculum for grades nine through 12 on the importance of public safety and community service and (b) plan for technical high schools to offer public safety tracks, including firefighting and EMS tracks and certifications;
3. introduce this curriculum and implement these tracks as a pilot program in one technical high school by July 1, 2025, make them available to other technical and other high schools, and coordinate state funding to the schools to provide the curriculum and tracks;
4. establish a fire service instructor training program for technical and other high schools;
5. support fire departments, fire districts, and other nonprofit entities providing or seeking to provide cadet or explorer programs; and
6. expand and implement the United States Fire Administration's fire service apprenticeship program's components.

Payments to High Schools, Fire Departments, and Other Entities

Starting in FY 24, the bill requires the board to pay \$5,000 to each (1) technical or other high school operating the board's public safety tracks curriculum or planning to do so in the following fiscal year and (2) fire department, fire district, or nonprofit operating a cadet or explorer program or planning to do so in the following fiscal year.

Office of State Fire Administrator Coordinating Staff

The bill requires the Office of State Fire Administrator to employ a full-time youth program coordinator to (1) oversee curriculum and public safety track programs developed by the board, (2) implement state standards and a best practices guide for the programs, (3) ensure their consistency and continuity, and (4) oversee program instructor hiring and training.

It similarly requires the office to employ a full-time cadet or explorer program coordinator to (1) oversee cadet or explorer programs, (2) implement state standards and a best practices guide for the programs, (3) encourage their establishment and expansion throughout the state, and (4) encourage the expanded use of regional fire training schools for these programs.

§ 2 — FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING COORDINATORS

The bill requires the DESPP commissioner to appoint a firefighter recruitment and training coordinator in each of the state's emergency preparedness regions. These coordinators must (1) recruit people for careers in firefighting or manage firefighter recruitment programs, (2) give training assistance to fire departments, and (3) coordinate or conduct training programs for fire departments that request this assistance.

§ 3 — STATE FACILITIES FOR FIREFIGHTER TRAINING AND TESTS

The bill requires the State Fire Administrator to (1) develop facilities across the state where people may train for and take the candidate physical ability test for firefighters year-round or (2) contract with a vendor to do so. He must:

1. seek to develop these facilities at multiple locations, with preference given to regional fire school sites, to improve training and test taking opportunities and access; and
2. provide training and test taking equipment to any participating regional fire school or state facility.

The bill requires the fire training director to coordinate the training and oversee the training and testing facilities.

§ 4 — STATE FIRE SCHOOL INSTRUCTORS AND FACILITIES

The bill requires DESPP to:

1. provide state fire school instructors and facilities sufficient to conduct training for at least three recruit classes per year and
2. compensate fire service instructors at a rate comparable to that of POST’s law enforcement instructors for police officer training.

§§ 5 & 18 — PARAMEDIC CANDIDATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The bill establishes a paramedic candidate scholarship program, administered by DPH, to give scholarships to people training to become licensed paramedics. Under the bill, DPH must:

1. by January 1, 2024, develop a policy on the program’s administration, including (a) its eligibility criteria and (b) how scholarships are paid and distributed; and
2. beginning with FY 25, award scholarships according to this policy and the bill.

The bill authorizes DPH to accept public or private gifts, grants, and donations to fund the program. Additionally, for FY 25, it appropriates \$750,000 to DPH from the General Fund for these scholarships.

§ 6 — RESIDENCY STATUS OF PROSPECTIVE FIREFIGHTERS

The bill prohibits fire departments from denying a prospective firefighter employment based solely on his or her status as a lawful

permanent resident noncitizen.

§ 7 — MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR PAID OR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

The bill requires CHFA to develop and administer a mortgage assistance program for uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments in the state purchasing a home in the community they serve as their principal residence. In giving this assistance, CHFA must (1) use down payment assistance or any other appropriate housing subsidies and (2) allow the mortgagee to realize a reasonable portion of the property's equity gain when it is sold.

§§ 8-10 — TUITION WAIVERS

The bill requires UConn, the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), and regional community-technical colleges to waive tuition for the following students:

1. uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments who have served for at least two years in the state, as documented by their department chief; and
2. dependent children of uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments who have served for at least five years in the state, as documented by the department's chief.

The bill also requires CSCU and the regional community-technical colleges to waive tuition for students attending the state fire school who are enrolled in a program offered together with a community college or state university that accredits courses in the program.

§§ 11 & 12 — VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM

Overview

The bill requires the State Retirement Commission to establish a volunteer firefighter LOSAP for eligible volunteer firefighters providing qualified services to a volunteer fire company or department in recognition of their long-term service. The program provides length of

service awards of up to a specified amount (\$6,000, annually adjusted for inflation) for each year of service credit. The benefits vest after a participant has five years of service credit.

The State Retirement Commission must establish the program and adopt its implementing regulations in consultation with the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and State Fire Administrator. The State Retirement Commission may contract with third parties to deliver program services.

The bill establishes a new trust fund, the Volunteer Firefighter LOSAP Trust Fund, which must be used to make the length of service award payments and pay the program's administrative expenses.

Regulations

By January 1, 2024, the State Retirement Commission, in consultation with the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and State Fire Administrator, must adopt regulations to implement the program. The regulations must include provisions on the following:

1. earning service credits and determining award amounts, which may include a point-based system that requires that members earn points for responding to calls, attending meetings and trainings, and other factors;
2. documenting these earned credits, including a system allowing volunteer fire companies and departments to annually report members' service credits; and
3. contesting service credit determinations awarded to participants.

Volunteer Firefighter LOSAP Trust Fund

The bill establishes the Volunteer Firefighter LOSAP Trust Fund as a separate, nonlapsing fund that must contain any money the law requires and be held separately from other moneys, funds, and accounts. It authorizes the fund to hold all deposits, gifts, grants, and donations from public or private sources, to allow it to carry out its purposes. The

investment earnings credited to the fund's assets become part of the fund and any balance remaining at the end of any fiscal year is carried forward to the next year.

It extends to the fund the same oversight and investment requirements set by state law for other state trust funds, including the Teachers' Pension Fund, the State Employees Retirement Fund, and the Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement Fund.

Annual Reporting of Members' Service Credits

Beginning by January 1, 2024, and annually afterwards, each volunteer fire company or department must submit to the State Retirement Commission (1) a list of eligible firefighters and (2) the amount of service credit each one earned with the department. They must do so as the commission prescribes.

Eligible Firefighters

Bona Fide Volunteers and Qualified Service. By April 1, 2024, and annually afterwards, the commissioner must determine which eligible firefighters satisfy the service credit requirements set by the program's regulations and the amount of credits applicable to each participant. An "eligible firefighter" is a firefighter who is:

1. a "bona fide volunteer" performing "qualified service" in a volunteer fire company or department and
2. not otherwise earning credit for his or her qualified service in another other LOSAP, municipal pension system, or other comparable program.

Under the bill, a "bona fide volunteer" is one who does not receive compensation for providing firefighting and prevention services, EMS, or ambulance services (i.e., "qualified service") except for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred while performing these services, reasonable benefits, and nominal fees for the services. The bill's definitions of "bona fide volunteer" and "qualified service" are tied to the federal rules for length of service award plans. Under federal law, a

plan paying only length of service awards to bona fide volunteers or their beneficiaries is exempt from the rules and tax treatment for deferred compensation plan under the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 457(e)).

Eligible Service. Participants must receive service credit for their service as an eligible firefighter before, on, and after July 1, 2023. Their service credits may not be forfeited.

Participation Waivers. Eligible firefighters may decline to participate in the program by filing an irrevocable participation waiver. The waiver must be signed by the firefighter and his or her volunteer fire company's or department's chief. The firefighter must file this waiver before he or she satisfies the service credit requirements to participate in the program.

Length of Service Awards Credited to Program Accounts

By July 1, 2024, and annually afterwards, the commission must determine which participants qualify for a length of service award based on the regulations' service credit requirements and credit their program accounts in an amount set by the regulations. Under the bill, the "program account" is a separate account maintained for each participant that reflects the applicable contributions and forfeitures, investment income or loss, and administrative and investment expenses allocated to each participant and paid from the trust fund.

The award may not exceed the limit established under federal law's special rules for length of service award plans. (The inflation-adjusted limit is \$7,000 for 2023.)

Vesting

A participant's accrued service award (i.e., the total value of his or her program account as of a given date) becomes vested once he or she has five years of service credit, as determined under the regulations. If he or she has not been an eligible firefighter for 36 consecutive months and their accrued service award has not become vested, his or her accrued service award is forfeited and deposited in the trust fund.

Payment of Accrued Service Awards

The commission must pay a participant his or her accrued service awards when the participant:

1. becomes vested and reaches the age of 65 or over;
2. has 20 years of service credit, except as described below;
3. is vested and has not been an eligible firefighter for at least 36 consecutive months; or
4. has been determined to be totally and permanently disabled by the U.S. Social Security Administration, the Workers' Compensation Commission, or any other entity the State Retirement Commission approves.

Under the bill, a participant may file a written election with the State Retirement commission before reaching 20 years of service credit to defer payment until he or she reaches age 65.

If a participant is paid his or her accrued service award and then qualifies for a length of service award at any other time under the bill's provisions and program regulations, the commission may pay his or her service award directly to the participant.

Death Benefits

Under the bill, if a participant dies before receiving his or her accrued service award or length of service award, the commission must pay it to the participant's designated beneficiary. Participants must designate their beneficiaries on a commission-prescribed form.

§§ 13 & 14 — NEW TIER OR CLASSIFICATION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS UNDER MERS***New Tier or Classification***

The bill requires the State Retirement Commission to develop a new tier or classification within MERS for public safety professionals. This tier or classification must do the following:

1. take into consideration the tiered classifications developed by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control (as described below) and
2. allow someone employed as a firefighter to retire from the job with one municipality and accept a firefighter job with another participating municipality and be eligible for retirement benefits with the second municipality.

In developing this new tier or classification, the commission may consult with the Commission on Fire Prevention Control, the State Fire Administrator, and any other entities it deems appropriate. By January 1, 2024, it must report to the Public Safety and Security Committee on (1) the terms and benefits that apply to the tier or classification and (2) any necessary implementing legislation.

Commission on Fire Prevention and Control Study

The bill requires the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to (1) study the different levels of training and certification and available benefits for firefighters and (2) recommend benefits to recruit and retain firefighters. It must report its findings to the Public Safety and Security Committee by January 1, 2024.

The study must do the following:

1. develop a tiered firefighter classification based on the factors it deems relevant, which may include one or more classifications for firefighter trainees, including firefighter certification and training level, years of experience, and responsibilities (i.e., supervisory, executive support, or administrative responsibilities and employed or volunteer status);
2. (a) identify existing firefighter benefits, including the bill's volunteer firefighter LOSAP (see § 11) and retirement tier developed by the State Retirement Commission (see § 13), (b) propose changes to them, and (c) identify new ones that could encourage employed and volunteer firefighter recruitment and

retention;

3. for these benefits, consider as an eligibility factor whether the firefighter (a) follows the National Fire Protection Association's standard 1582 (i.e., the standard outlining an occupational medical program to reduce risks and provide for firefighters' health, safety, and effectiveness) and (b) does not use tobacco products; and
4. consider basing eligibility for these benefits on a firefighter's inclusion in a specific classification tier to encourage firefighter recruitment and retention.

§ 15 — DPH PILOT PROGRAM FOR CARDIAC ARREST DETECTION EQUIPMENT AND SYSTEMS

The bill requires DPH to establish a pilot program to provide emergency services organizations with (1) equipment that can identify people at a high cardiac arrest risk, (2) an early detection system that can identify people at a low cardiac arrest risk before they experience critical cardiac issues, or (3) both. Under the bill, "emergency services organizations" are state and local police departments; paid or volunteer fire departments; municipal constabularies; ambulance companies; and public, private, or volunteer organizations that provide emergency transportation or treatment to patients. By October 1, 2023, DPH must (1) post the program's description on its website (in a conspicuous place), including its eligibility criteria and application process; and (2) notify each emergency service organization about the opportunity to apply.

By January 1, 2025, the DPH commissioner must report to the Public Safety and Security Committee on the pilot program's results and recommend whether to continue or expand it.

§§ 16 & 17 — APPROPRIATIONS FOR REDUCING FIRE SCHOOL TRAINEE COSTS

The bill appropriates \$500,000 in each year of the FY 24-25 biennium to DESPP from the General Fund to reduce the cost of attending the state

fire school for trainees and fire departments. Under the bill, these funds are in addition to any reimbursement the state provides for Firefighter 1 certification and recruit training from the state fire school training and education extension account.

The bill appropriates an additional \$500,000 in each year of the FY 24-25 biennium to DESPP from the General Fund to reduce the cost of attending regional fire schools.

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

sHB 6838, favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, (1) eliminates the Office of State Fire Administration and creates a Division of Fire Services Administration within DESPP as a successor agency; (2) transfers the State Fire Administrator’s current duties to a deputy commissioner and expands them; and (3) appropriates \$250,000 for DESPP to study issues facing the state’s fire service and develop a strategic master plan to address those issues.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 23 Nay 2 (03/16/2023)