



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 663

January Session, 2023

Substitute House Bill No. 6841

House of Representatives, April 27, 2023

The Committee on Education reported through REP. CURREY of the 11th 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*) The Commissioner of
2 Emergency Services and Public Protection shall appoint a firefighter
3 recruitment and training coordinator in each emergency preparedness
4 region designated by the Division of Emergency Management and
5 Homeland Security within the Department of Emergency Services and
6 Public Protection. Each such coordinator shall (1) recruit individuals for
7 careers in firefighting or manage such recruitment programs, and (2)
8 provide training assistance to fire departments and, upon request of a
9 fire department, coordinate or conduct training programs.

10 Sec. 2. Section 7-323o of the general statutes is repealed and the
11 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

12 (a) There is established the position of State Fire Administrator who
13 shall be recommended by the Commission on Fire Prevention and

14 Control and appointed by the Commissioner of Emergency Services and
15 Public Protection and who shall: (1) Carry out the requirements of
16 section 7-323n; (2) administer federal funds and grants allocated to the
17 fire services of the state; (3) provide technical assistance and guidance
18 to fire fighting forces of any state or municipal agency; (4) develop a
19 centralized information and audiovisual library regarding fire
20 prevention and control; (5) accumulate, disseminate and analyze fire
21 prevention data; (6) recommend specifications of fire service materials
22 and equipment and assist in the purchasing thereof; (7) assist in mutual
23 aid coordination; (8) coordinate fire programs with those of the other
24 states; (9) assist in communications coordination; (10) establish and
25 maintain a fire service information program; and (11) review the
26 purchase of fire apparatus or equipment at state institutions, facilities
27 and properties and, on and after July 1, 1985, coordinate the training and
28 education of fire service personnel at such institutions, facilities and
29 properties. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to apply
30 to forest fire prevention and control programs administered by the
31 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection pursuant to
32 sections 23-33 to 23-57, inclusive.

33 (b) (1) The State Fire Administrator shall develop, or enter into an
34 agreement with a vendor to develop, facilities across the state that
35 provide opportunities for individuals to train for and take the candidate
36 physical ability test for firefighters throughout the year. The
37 administrator shall seek to develop such facilities at multiple locations
38 that are designed to improve opportunities for, and access to, training
39 and test taking, and shall give a preference to locations at regional fire
40 school sites. The administrator shall provide equipment for such
41 training and test taking at any regional fire school or state facility that
42 offers such training and test taking.

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

46 (c) The Office of the State Fire Administrator shall employ a full-time

47 cadet or explorer program coordinator, who shall coordinate and
48 oversee cadet or explorer programs, implement state standards and a
49 best practices guide for such programs, encourage establishment and
50 expansion of such programs throughout the state and encourage the
51 expanded use of regional fire schools for such programs.

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

54 (a) The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
55 shall (1) maintain and operate a state fire school that shall serve as the
56 training and education facility for the Commission on Fire Prevention
57 and Control, [and] (2) provide training and educational services in
58 accordance with the standards established pursuant to section 7-323l,
59 and (3) provide instructors and facilities sufficient to conduct training
60 for at least three classes of recruits at the state fire school each year. The
61 use of any hazardous material, as defined in section 29-307a, except a
62 virgin fuel, is prohibited in the simulation of any fire. The Department
63 of Emergency Services and Public Protection shall, in consultation with
64 the commission, fix fees for training and education programs and
65 sessions and for such other purposes deemed necessary for the
66 operation and support of the school. Such fees shall be used solely for
67 training and education purposes.

68 (b) The department may establish and maintain a state fire school
69 training and education extension account, which shall be a separate
70 account within the General Fund. The account shall contain any moneys
71 required by law to be deposited in the account. The account shall be
72 used for the operation of such training and education programs and
73 sessions as said department may establish, for the purchase of such
74 equipment as is required for use in the operation of such programs and
75 sessions, and, within available funding, for (1) reimbursement to
76 municipalities and municipal fire departments for one-half of the costs
77 of Firefighter I certification and recruit training of municipal volunteer
78 and paid fire service personnel, and (2) reimbursement to state agencies
79 for one-half of the costs of Firefighter I certification and recruit training

80 of state agency fire service personnel. All proceeds derived from the
81 operation of the training and education programs and sessions shall be
82 deposited in the General Fund and shall be credited to and become a
83 part of the resources of the account. All direct expenses incurred in the
84 conduct of the training, certification and education programs and
85 sessions shall be charged, and any payments of interest and principal of
86 bonds or any sums transferable to any fund for the payment of interest
87 and principal of bonds and any cost of equipment for such operations
88 may be charged, against the account on order of the State Comptroller.
89 Any balance of receipts above expenditures shall remain in the account
90 to be used by the department for training and education programs and
91 sessions, and for the acquisition, as provided by section 4b-21, alteration
92 and repairs of real property for educational facilities, except such sums
93 as may be required to be transferred from time to time to any fund for
94 the redemption of bonds and payment of interest on bonds, provided
95 repairs, alterations or additions to educational facilities costing fifty
96 thousand dollars or less shall require the approval of the Commissioner
97 of Administrative Services, and capital projects costing over fifty
98 thousand dollars shall require the approval of the General Assembly or,
99 when the General Assembly is not in session, of the Finance Advisory
100 Committee.

101 (c) The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection may
102 establish and maintain a state fire school auxiliary services account,
103 which shall be a separate account within the General Fund. The account
104 shall be used for the operation, maintenance and repair of auxiliary
105 service facilities and for such other auxiliary activities of the state fire
106 school as said department determines. The proceeds of such activities
107 shall be deposited in the General Fund and shall be credited to and
108 become a part of the resources of the account. All direct expenses of
109 operation, maintenance and repair of facilities, food services and other
110 auxiliary activities shall be charged, and any payments of interest and
111 principal of bonds or any sums transferable to any fund for the payment
112 of interest and principal of bonds and any cost of equipment for such
113 operations may be charged, against the account on order of the State
114 Comptroller. Any balance of receipts above expenditures shall remain

115 in the account to be used for the improvement and extension of such
116 activities, except such sums as may be required to be transferred from
117 time to time to any fund for the redemption of bonds and payment of
118 interest on bonds, provided repairs, alterations or additions to auxiliary
119 service facilities costing fifty thousand dollars or less shall require the
120 approval of the Commissioner of Administrative Services, and capital
121 projects costing over fifty thousand dollars shall require the approval of
122 the General Assembly or, when the General Assembly is not in session,
123 of the Finance Advisory Committee. The department, with the approval
124 of the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Finance
125 Advisory Committee, may borrow from the resources of the General
126 Fund at any time such sum or sums as it deems advisable, to establish
127 or continue auxiliary services activities, such sums to be repaid in
128 accordance with such schedule as the Secretary of the Office of Policy
129 and Management shall establish.

130 (d) The compensation provided by the department to a fire service
131 instructor to provide fire service training shall be comparable to
132 compensation provided by the Police Officer Standards and Training
133 Council to a law enforcement instructor for police officer training.

134 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) There is established a
135 paramedic candidate scholarship program administered by the
136 Department of Public Health. The program shall provide scholarships
137 to individuals receiving training to become licensed as a paramedic
138 pursuant to section 20-206ll of the general statutes.

139 (b) Not later than January 1, 2024, the department shall develop a
140 policy concerning the administration of the scholarship program. Such
141 policy shall include, but need not be limited to, provisions regarding (1)
142 eligibility criteria, and (2) the payment and distribution of the
143 scholarships.

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

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

151 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) No fire department shall deny
152 employment as a firefighter to a prospective employee solely on the
153 basis of the prospective employee's status as a noncitizen of the United
154 States, provided such prospective employee is lawfully admitted for
155 permanent residence of the United States under federal law and
156 regulations.

157 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The Connecticut Housing Finance
158 Authority shall develop and administer a program of mortgage
159 assistance to uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments
160 in the state. Such assistance shall be available to an eligible firefighter
161 for the purchase of a house as such firefighter's principal residence in
162 the community served by such firefighter. In making mortgage
163 assistance available under the program, the authority shall utilize down
164 payment assistance or any other appropriate housing subsidies. The
165 terms of any mortgage assistance shall allow the mortgagee to realize a
166 reasonable portion of the equity gain upon sale of the mortgaged
167 property.

168 Sec. 7. Subsection (d) of section 10a-77 of the general statutes is
169 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
170 *2023*):

171 (d) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition at any of
172 the regional community-technical colleges (1) for any dependent child
173 of a person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to
174 be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in
175 such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted
176 for admission to such institution and is a resident of the state at the time
177 such child is accepted for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the
178 provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in
179 section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in
180 section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in

181 time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military
182 service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to such
183 institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is
184 accepted for admission to such institution, (3) for any resident of the
185 state sixty-two years of age or older, provided, at the end of the regular
186 registration period, there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number
187 of students other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to
188 this subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to
189 enroll and there is space available in such course after accommodating
190 all such students, (4) for any student attending the Connecticut State
191 Police Academy who is enrolled in a law enforcement program at said
192 academy offered in coordination with a regional community-technical
193 college which accredits courses taken in such program, (5) for any active
194 member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has
195 been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's
196 designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled
197 or accepted for admission to such institution on a full-time or part-time
198 basis in an undergraduate degree-granting program, (6) for any
199 dependent child of a (A) police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or
200 supernumerary or auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in
201 section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal
202 employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in
203 the line of duty, (7) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child
204 or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of
205 this state, (8) for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was
206 killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and
207 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, [and] (9) for any resident of
208 the state who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who
209 was killed in action while performing active military duty with the
210 armed forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and
211 who was a resident of this state, (10) for a uniformed member of a paid
212 or volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such
213 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
214 two years, (11) for any dependent child of a uniformed member of a paid
215 or volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such

216 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
217 five years, and (12) for any student attending the state fire school, who
218 is enrolled in a program at said school offered in coordination with a
219 regional community-technical college that accredits courses taken in
220 such program. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance
221 with the provisions of this subsection also receives educational
222 reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the
223 amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of
224 the National Guard described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall
225 be given the same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in
226 registering for courses at regional community-technical colleges.
227 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this
228 subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less than one
229 year.

230 Sec. 8. Subsection (d) of section 10a-99 of the general statutes is
231 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
232 *2023*):

233 (d) Said board shall waive the payment of tuition fees at the
234 Connecticut State University System (1) for any dependent child of a
235 person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to be
236 missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such
237 armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for
238 admission to such institution and is a resident of the state at the time
239 such child is accepted for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the
240 provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in
241 section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in
242 section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in
243 time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military
244 service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to such
245 institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is
246 accepted for admission to such institution, (3) for any resident of the
247 state sixty-two years of age or older who has been accepted for
248 admission to such institution, provided (A) such resident is enrolled in
249 a degree-granting program, or (B) at the end of the regular registration

250 period, there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students
251 other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this
252 subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to enroll
253 and there is space available in such course after accommodating all such
254 students, (4) for any student attending the Connecticut Police Academy
255 who is enrolled in a law enforcement program at said academy offered
256 in coordination with the university which accredits courses taken in
257 such program, (5) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or
258 Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General
259 or such Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of
260 the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to such
261 institution on a full-time or part-time basis in an undergraduate or
262 graduate degree-granting program, (6) for any dependent child of a (A)
263 police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or
264 auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or
265 member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D)
266 state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7)
267 for any resident of this state who is a dependent child or surviving
268 spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of the state, (8)
269 for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a
270 multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and
271 Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, [and] (9) for any resident of the state
272 who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was
273 killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed
274 forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was
275 a resident of this state, (10) for a uniformed member of a paid or
276 volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such
277 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
278 two years, (11) for any dependent child of a uniformed member of a paid
279 or volunteer fire department, who, as documented by the chief of such
280 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than
281 five years, and (12) for any student attending the state fire school, who
282 is enrolled in a program at said school offered in coordination with the
283 university that accredits courses taken in such program. If any person
284 who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions of this

285 subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an employer,
286 such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such educational
287 reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National Guard
288 described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall be given the same
289 status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for courses
290 at Connecticut state universities. Notwithstanding the provisions of
291 section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in this state"
292 includes domicile for less than one year.

293 Sec. 9. Subsection (e) of section 10a-105 of the general statutes is
294 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
295 *2023*):

296 (e) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition fees at
297 The University of Connecticut (1) for any dependent child of a person
298 whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to be missing
299 in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed
300 forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission
301 to The University of Connecticut and is a resident of the state at the time
302 such child is accepted for admission to said institution, (2) subject to the
303 provisions of subsection (f) 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 said
308 institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is
309 accepted for admission to said institution, (3) for any resident of the state
310 sixty-two years of age or older who has been accepted for admission to
311 said institution, provided (A) such resident is enrolled in a degree-
312 granting program, or (B) at the end of the regular registration period,
313 there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students other
314 than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to
315 offer the course in which such resident intends to enroll and there is
316 space available in such course after accommodating all such students,
317 (4) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or Air National
318 Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General or such

319 Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of the guard,
320 and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to said institution on a full-
321 time or part-time basis in an undergraduate or graduate degree-
322 granting program, (5) for any dependent child of a (A) police officer, as
323 defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or auxiliary police officer,
324 (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire
325 company, (C) municipal employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in
326 section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (6) for any resident of the state
327 who is the dependent child or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist
328 victim who was a resident of the state, (7) for any dependent child of a
329 resident of the state who was killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the
330 intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005,
331 [and] (8) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or
332 surviving spouse of a person who was killed in action while performing
333 active military duty with the armed forces of the United States on or
334 after September 11, 2001, and who was a resident of this state, (9) for a
335 uniformed member of a paid or volunteer fire department, who, as
336 documented by the chief of such department, has served as such a
337 member in the state for not less than two years, and (10) for any
338 dependent child of a uniformed member of a paid or volunteer fire
339 department, who, as documented by the chief of such department, has
340 served as such a member in the state for not less than five years. If any
341 person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions
342 of this subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an
343 employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such
344 educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National
345 Guard described in subdivision (4) of this subsection shall be given the
346 same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for
347 courses at The University of Connecticut. Notwithstanding the
348 provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in
349 this state" includes domicile for less than one year.

350 Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) As used in this section:

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

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

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

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

365 (5) "Participant" means an eligible firefighter who participates in the
366 program.

367 (6) "Program account" means a separate account maintained for each
368 participant reflecting applicable contributions, applicable forfeitures,
369 investment income or loss and administrative and investment expenses
370 allocated to each participant and paid from the Volunteer Firefighter
371 Length of Service Award Program Trust Fund, established under
372 subsection (c) of this section.

373 (7) "Qualified service" has the same meaning as provided in Section
374 457(e)(11) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent
375 corresponding internal revenue code of the United States, as amended
376 from time to time.

377 (b) The State Retirement Commission, in consultation with the
378 Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the State Fire
379 Administrator, shall establish a volunteer firefighter length of service
380 award program. The State Retirement Commission may contract with
381 third parties to provide services for such program.

382 (c) There is established a Volunteer Firefighter Length of Service
383 Award Program Trust Fund. The fund shall contain any moneys

384 required or permitted by law to be deposited in the fund and may apply
385 for and accept gifts, grants or donations from public or private sources
386 to enable the trust fund to carry out its objectives. Investment earnings
387 credited to the assets of the fund shall become part of the assets of the
388 fund. The fund shall be held in trust separate and apart from all other
389 moneys, funds and accounts. Any balance remaining in the fund at the
390 end of any fiscal year shall be carried forward in the fund for the fiscal
391 year next succeeding. The fund shall be used to make payments as
392 provided in this section and for administrative expenses related to the
393 provisions of this section.

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

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

404 (2) An eligible firefighter may decline to become a participant in the
405 program if such firefighter files with the commission, prior to such
406 firefighter satisfying such service credit requirements to become a
407 participant in the program, an irrevocable waiver of participation that
408 is signed by the eligible firefighter and the chief of the volunteer fire
409 company or department of which such firefighter is a member.

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

413 (f) Not later than July 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the
414 commission shall credit a length of service award, in an amount
415 determined by the regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (k) of this

416 section, to the program account of each participant who the commission
417 determines qualifies for a length of service award pursuant to the
418 service credit requirements established by such regulations. No such
419 award may exceed the limit provided in Section 457(e)(11) of the
420 Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent corresponding
421 internal revenue code of the United States, as amended from time to
422 time.

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

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

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

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

435 (2) Has twenty years of service credit, provided the participant may,
436 prior to attaining such twenty years of service credit, file a written
437 election with the commission to defer payment of the accrued service
438 award until the participant attains the age of sixty-five;

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

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

445 (i) If a participant is paid such participant's accrued service award

446 pursuant to subsection (h) of this section and subsequently qualifies for
447 a length of service award at any other time pursuant to the provisions
448 of this section and regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (k) of this
449 section, the commission shall pay such service award directly to such
450 participant.

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

456 (k) Not later than January 1, 2024, the State Retirement Commission,
457 in consultation with the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control
458 and the State Fire Administrator, shall adopt regulations, in accordance
459 with the provisions of chapter 54 of the general statutes, to implement
460 the volunteer firefighter length of service award program. Such
461 regulations shall include, but need not be limited to, provisions
462 regarding (1) earning service credits and determining the amount of
463 awards, which may include a point-based system that requires earning
464 points for responding to calls, attending meetings and trainings or other
465 factors, (2) documentation for earning such credits, including a system
466 to permit volunteer fire companies and departments to comply with the
467 requirements of subsection (d) of this section, and (3) contesting
468 determinations of service credits awarded to a participant.

469 Sec. 11. Section 3-13c of the general statutes is repealed and the
470 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

471 Trust funds as used in sections 3-13 to 3-13e, inclusive, and 3-31b shall
472 be construed to include Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement
473 Fund A, Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement Fund B,
474 Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund, Family and Medical Leave
475 Insurance Trust Fund, State's Attorneys' Retirement Fund, Teachers'
476 Annuity Fund, Teachers' Pension Fund, Teachers' Survivorship and
477 Dependency Fund, School Fund, State Employees Retirement Fund, the
478 Hospital Insurance Fund, Policemen and Firemen Survivor's Benefit

479 Fund, Volunteer Firefighter Length of Service Award Program Trust
480 Fund, any trust fund described in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of
481 section 7-450 that is administered, held or invested by the State
482 Treasurer and all other trust funds administered, held or invested by the
483 State Treasurer.

484 Sec. 12. (*Effective from passage*) The State Retirement Commission shall
485 develop a new tier or classification within the municipal employees'
486 retirement system for public safety professionals. Such tier or
487 classification shall (1) take into consideration the tiered classifications of
488 firefighters developed pursuant to section 13 of this act, and (2) permit
489 an individual employed as a firefighter to retire from such position with
490 one participating municipality and accept employment as a firefighter
491 with another participating municipality and be eligible for retirement
492 benefits from such other municipality. The commission may consult
493 with the Commission on Fire Prevention Control, the State Fire
494 Administrator and any other entities deemed appropriate in developing
495 such new tier or classification. Not later than January 1, 2024, the
496 commission shall report to the joint standing committee of the General
497 Assembly having cognizance of matter relating to public safety and
498 security, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the
499 general statutes, regarding the terms and benefits that will be applicable
500 to such tier or classification and legislation necessary to implement such
501 tier or classification.

502 Sec. 13. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commission on Fire Prevention
503 and Control shall conduct a study of the different levels of training and
504 certification of firefighters and the benefits available to firefighters and
505 make recommendations regarding benefits to provide incentives to
506 encourage individuals to begin a career in firefighting and encourage
507 firefighters to continue in their careers in firefighting. As part of such
508 study, the commission shall:

509 (1) Develop a tiered classification of firefighters based on various
510 factors the commission deems relevant, which may include, but need
511 not be limited to, a firefighter's certification and level of training, years

512 of experience, responsibilities, including any supervisory, executive,
513 support or administrative responsibilities and status as an employed or
514 volunteer firefighter, and the commission may include one of more
515 classifications for individuals training to become a firefighter;

516 (2) Identify existing benefits available to firefighters, including the
517 volunteer firefighter length of service award program established under
518 section 10 of this act and the retirement tier developed pursuant to
519 section 12 of this act, propose changes to any such benefits and identify
520 new benefits that could encourage recruitment and retention of
521 employed and volunteer firefighters;

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

529 (4) Consider whether eligibility for any one or more benefits
530 identified under subdivision (2) of this subsection should be determined
531 based on a firefighter's inclusion in a specific classification tier, as
532 developed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in order to
533 provide incentives that encourage individuals to begin a career in
534 firefighting and encourage firefighters to continue in their careers in
535 firefighting.

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

541 Sec. 14. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) The Department of Public Health
542 shall establish a pilot program to provide emergency services
543 organizations, as defined in section 19a-904 of the general statutes, with

544 (1) equipment capable of identifying individuals at high risk of cardiac
545 arrest, (2) an early detection system capable of identifying individuals
546 who are at low risk of cardiac arrest before such individuals experience
547 critical cardiac issues, or (3) both such equipment and system. Not later
548 than October 1, 2023, the department shall (A) post in a conspicuous
549 place on the department's Internet web site a description of the program,
550 including, but not limited to, eligibility criteria and the application
551 process for such program, and (B) notify each emergency services
552 organization of the opportunity to apply for participation in such
553 program.

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

560 Sec. 15. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The sum of five hundred thousand
561 dollars is appropriated to the Department of Emergency Services and
562 Public Protection from the General Fund, for the fiscal years ending June
563 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025, for the purpose of providing funds, in
564 addition to any reimbursement provided pursuant to subsection (b) of
565 section 7-323p of the general statutes, as amended by this act, to reduce
566 the cost to trainees and fire departments of attendance at the state fire
567 school.

568 Sec. 16. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The sum of five hundred thousand
569 dollars is appropriated to the Department of Emergency Services and
570 Public Protection from the General Fund, for the fiscal years ending June
571 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025, for the purpose of providing funds to reduce
572 the cost to trainees and fire departments of attendance at regional fire
573 schools.

574 Sec. 17. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) The sum of seven hundred fifty
575 thousand dollars is appropriated to the Department of Public Health
576 from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for the

577 purposes of providing scholarships pursuant to section 4 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>	7-323o
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	7-323p
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
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>	10a-77(d)
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	10a-99(d)
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	10a-105(e)
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>July 1, 2023</i>	3-13c
Sec. 12	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 13	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 14	<i>July 1, 2023</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

ED *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	877,606	532,880
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	223,921
Public Health, Dept.	GF - Cost	See Below	See Below
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	235,588	287,665
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 \$
All Municipalities	Potential Savings	See Below	See Below
All Municipalities	Potential Cost	See Below	See Below

Explanation

The bill makes numerous changes designed to help recruit and retain

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.

people in firefighting and emergency medical services (EMS) careers, resulting in a cost to the state of at least \$2.3 million in FY 24 and \$2.8 million in FY 25 as well as the various other impacts described below.

Section 1 requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (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 \$414,429 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.

Section 2 requires the State Fire Administrator to develop facilities to assist in training and testing for the candidate's 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.

This section also requires DESPP to hire one full-time cadet or explorer program coordinator, resulting in a cost to DESPP of \$91,416 in FY 24 and \$93,451 in FY 25 and a cost to OSC of \$34,862 in FY 24 and \$35,734 in FY 25 for associated fringe benefits. These costs reflect an estimated starting salary for this position³ of \$81,416 and \$10,000 for equipment and training expenses each year.

Section 3 requires that a fire service instructor's compensation be comparable to that of a law enforcement instructor, which may reduce

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

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

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 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 4 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 17** appropriates \$750,000 to DPH for paramedic candidate scholarships in FY 25.

Section 5 prohibits fire departments from denying employment to lawful resident noncitizens, resulting in no fiscal impact to the state or municipalities.

Section 6 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 7-9 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

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.

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.

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 10-11 may result in start-up costs to the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) 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 12 may result in significant costs to OSC 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 13 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 14 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 15 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 16 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 15 through 17 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. 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 (§ 1);
2. requires the state fire administrator to develop facilities across the state where people can train for and take the firefighter physical ability test (§ 2);
3. requires the state fire administrator to employ a full-time cadet or explorer program coordinator (§ 2);
4. requires DESPP to (a) provide state fire school instructors and facilities sufficient to train at least three recruit classes per year and (b) pay fire service instructors doing fire service training at a rate that is comparable to what the Police Officer Standards and Training Council pays law enforcement officers doing police officer training (§ 3);
5. establishes a Department of Public Health (DPH)-administered paramedic candidate scholarship program to give scholarships to people training to become licensed paramedics and appropriates

- \$750,000 to DPH for FY 25 to fund these scholarships (§§ 4 & 17);
6. bars fire departments from denying prospective firefighters employment based solely on their status as a lawful permanent resident noncitizen (§ 5);
 7. requires the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to develop and administer a mortgage assistance program for uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments (§ 6);
 8. 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 at the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities or community colleges who is attending the state fire school as part of a program offered in coordination with the college or university (§§ 7-9);
 9. requires the State Retirement Commission to establish a volunteer firefighter length of service award program (LOSAP) (§§ 10 & 11);
 10. requires the State Retirement Commission to develop a new tier within the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) for public safety professionals (§ 12);
 11. 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 (§ 13);
 12. requires the DPH commissioner to establish a pilot program to provide emergency services organizations with specified equipment and systems for detecting critical cardiac issues (§ 14);
 13. 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 (§ 15); and

14. appropriates \$500,000 to DESPP for FYs 24 and 25 to reduce the cost to trainees and fire departments for attending regional fire schools (§ 16).

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

§ 1 — 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.

§ 2 — 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.

§ 2 — CADET OR EXPLORER PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The bill requires the Office of State Fire Administrator to hire 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 them.

§§ 4 & 17 — 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 — 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 who are buying a home as their principal residence in the community where they serve. In doing so, 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.

§§ 7-9 — 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.

§§ 10 & 11 — 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 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 that state law sets 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, each volunteer fire company or department must annually 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. Starting by April 1, 2024, the commission must annually 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 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

Starting by July 1, 2024, the commission must annually 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 award 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. is totally and permanently disabled as determined 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 must 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.

§§ 12 & 13 — 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. The commission 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 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 § 10) and retirement tier developed by the State Retirement Commission (see § 12); (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.

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

The bill requires DPH to establish a pilot program to give emergency services organizations (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.

§§ 15 & 16 — 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 (File 367), 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 them.

Legislative History

The House referred the bill (File 370) to the Education Committee, which reported a substitute that removed provisions (1) creating a Fire Service Youth Program Advisory Board to, among other things, develop a high school curriculum on the importance of public safety and community service and (2) on hiring an associated youth program coordinator.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 23 Nay 2 (03/16/2023)

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 41 Nay 1 (04/18/2023)