

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5437

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A STUDENT LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM FOR FIRST

Title: RESPONDERS.

Vote Date: 3/14/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/7/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,
Rep. Kara Rochelle, 104th District,
Rep. Gary Turco, 27th District,
Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd District.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This proposed legislation establishes a student loan subsidy for eligible first responders as defined by section 52-146v of the general statutes. The Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority is tasked with developing the program and determining eligibility requirements for subsidizing interest rates on specific loans using the funds allocated in this bill. The bill's primary objective is to address the state's shortage of police officers and other first responders by offering financial incentives to attract and retain workers in these critical positions. By covering some of the costs related to their training and education, this bill seeks to alleviate the financial burden on eligible first responders and promote their continued service to the community.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority \(CHESLA\), Executive Director, Jeannette W. Weldon](#): supports the intent of this bill but clarifies that they do not have funds to provide for a loan subsidy or forgiveness program as outlined in the underlying bills. It was stated that their ability to provide such a program is dependent on identifying a funding mechanism for the loans and subsidy provided by the legislation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities & the Connecticut Center for Assisted Living \(CAHCF/CCAL\), President and CEO, Matthew Barrett:](#) supports this bill, as it addresses issues of staffing and supporting the healthcare workforce. It was stated that Connecticut is facing a healthcare employee shortage that is leaving the state's elderly residents and nursing homes in jeopardy as many facilities haven't recovered from COVID job loss and are operating on a net revenue loss. It was further stated that the workforce development policies in this legislation and others would be meaningful steps towards supporting seniors with high quality care.

[Council 4 AFSCME Public Safety Council, Legislative Director, Brian Anderson:](#) Supports this bill because it would be a meaningful step in addressing the recruitment and retention crisis among the State's police force.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges \(CCIC\), President, Jennifer Widness:](#) supports the intent of bill and others aimed at providing scholarships or loan forgiveness to students seeking degrees in certain industries but requests that any scholarship or loan forgiveness opportunities created for students attending Connecticut public colleges also be made available to students attending relevant degree programs at private, non-profit colleges in the state. It is stated that CCIC's 15 private, non-profit colleges enroll over 80,000 students in Connecticut annually and play a significant role in training individuals in various fields, such as educators, law enforcement officials, health professions, and engineers.

Reported by: Lukas Houle

Date: 3/21/2023