

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH  
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



**PA 24-20—sSB 183**  
*Transportation Committee*

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND CONCERNING LOW-SPEED VEHICLES, THE TOWING OF OCCUPIED VEHICLES, SCHOOL BUSES, ELECTRIC COMMERCIAL VEHICLES, THE PASSENGER REGISTRATION OF PICK-UP TRUCKS AND REMOVABLE WINDSHIELD PLACARDS FOR PERSONS WHO ARE BLIND AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

**[§§ 1-3 — ELECTRONIC ISSUANCE LICENSES](#)**

*Requires registration and title companies that file applications electronically to get an electronic issuance license from DMV and establishes a licensing process and licensee operating requirements; lowers the threshold at which these companies may be required to file electronically; increases the total amount of surety bonds these companies must provide*

**[§ 4 — MOTOR VEHICLE TRANSPORTER REGISTRATION](#)**

*Imposes a late fee for failing to timely renew a transporter registration and prohibits DMV from renewing one 45 days after expiration*

**[§ 5 — DEALER AND REPAIRER BACKGROUND CHECKS](#)**

*Modifies the requirements for fingerprinting and background checks for applicants for a new or renewed motor vehicle dealer's or repairer's license*

**[§ 6 — MOTOR VEHICLE RECYCLERS' SURETY BONDS](#)**

*Requires motor vehicle recyclers to furnish a \$25,000 surety bond*

**[§§ 7-9 — COMMERCIAL DRIVING SCHOOLS AND INSTRUCTORS](#)**

*Increases the surety bond amount for driving schools to \$50,000 per location, requires driving instructors to wear ID badges while providing instruction, and makes other changes related to driving school and instructor licensees*

**[§ 10 — ALTERED, COMPOSITE, GREY-MARKET, AND SALVAGE VEHICLES](#)**

*Requires that salvage vehicles be inspected by DMV-authorized repairers rather than DMV and defines the different categories of altered vehicles that must be inspected before titling and registering them*

**[§§ 11-32 & 39 — MINOR AND TECHNICAL CHANGES](#)**

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

*Makes numerous minor and technical changes, principally to change references to “commercial driver’s instruction permit” to “commercial learner’s permit,” conforming to the term used in federal law*

### §§ 33-36 — LOW-SPEED VEHICLES

*Generally allows the operation of “low-speed vehicles” on roads with speed limits up to 25 mph and makes them “motor vehicles” under state motor vehicle laws (i.e., Title 14), generally subjecting them to the same requirements as other vehicles under these laws*

### § 37 — TOWING OCCUPIED VEHICLES

*Prohibits a licensed wrecker from knowingly allowing any person to occupy a vehicle while it is being towed*

### § 38 — SCHOOL BUS IDLING

*Requires the DMV commissioner, by September 1, 2024, to review, and amend or revise if needed, any regulations or policies on inspecting school buses to ensure they promote adherence to anti-idling laws*

### § 40 — SCHOOL BUS SEAT BELTS

*Reestablishes and makes permanent a DMV school bus seat belt pilot program to provide 50% sales tax refunds for purchases of buses equipped with three-point seat belts*

### § 41 — WEIGHT TOLERANCE EXEMPTION FOR ELECTRIC COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

*Grants a weight tolerance exemption to primarily electric commercial motor vehicles driving on any road in the state, allowing them to exceed the state’s various vehicle weight limits by up to 2,000 pounds; under federal law, the state must already provide this exemption when these vehicles are on the interstates and certain roads near them*

### § 42 — PICK-UP TRUCK PASSENGER REGISTRATION

*Makes pick-up trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating of 8,501 to 8,550 pounds eligible for a passenger registration if they are not used commercially (currently, they must be registered as combination vehicles); potentially allows them to access roads or other places that limit access by commercial traffic (e.g., state parkways)*

### §§ 43-45 — ACCESSIBLE PARKING

*Modifies the conditions under which a health care professional may certify an applicant for an accessible parking windshield placard; prohibits health care professionals from making fees they charge to applicants seeking certification contingent on whether or not they certify the applicants’ eligibility; eliminates the requirement that the Transportation Committee House chairperson’s appointment to the Accessible Parking Advisory Council be a municipal planner*

**SUMMARY:** This act makes changes in laws affecting the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), DMV-licensed businesses, vehicle registration and operation, vehicle weight limits, school buses, towing, and accessible parking. It also makes technical and conforming changes.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** October 1, 2024, unless otherwise noted below.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

### §§ 1-3 — ELECTRONIC ISSUANCE LICENSES

*Requires registration and title companies that file applications electronically to get an electronic issuance license from DMV and establishes a licensing process and licensee operating requirements; lowers the threshold at which these companies may be required to file electronically; increases the total amount of surety bonds these companies must provide*

The act modifies the regulatory treatment of people and entities that are engaged in the business of electronically filing, on behalf of their customers, registration or title applications with DMV (i.e., registration and title companies).

Prior law and department regulations authorized the DMV commissioner to permit or require a registration and title company to file these applications electronically if, among other things, he determines that the company is qualified based on the conditions set in statute and department regulations.

The act replaces this authorization with a statutory licensing structure for registration and title companies. The act prohibits registration and title companies from filing registration and title applications electronically without an “electronic issuance license.” But it allows currently authorized registration and title companies to continue filing applications electronically until January 1, 2025. After this date, these companies are no longer allowed to use the electronic system without an electronic issuance license.

The act specifically excludes the following entities from the electronic issuance license requirement: licensed motor vehicle dealers, licensed leasing or rental companies, and DMV contractors.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024, except for the provision allowing currently authorized companies to operate until January 1, 2025, which takes effect upon passage.

#### *Threshold for Filing Electronically*

The act lowers the threshold at which a registration and title company may be required to file applications online. Prior law allowed the DMV commissioner to require a registration and title company to file applications electronically if he determines that the company files an average of seven or more applications per month. The act lowers this threshold to five. It also specifies that companies DMV requires to file electronically must apply for an electronic issuance license.

Under the act, as under existing law, any company that fails or refuses to file applications electronically upon the commissioner’s request must pay a \$25 fee for each application it submits.

#### *License Application and Renewal Process*

The act requires electronic issuance license applicants to submit an application with the information DMV requires and pay a \$250 license fee. Applicants for an initial license or a renewal must be fingerprinted and undergo a state and national criminal records check. If the applicant is a firm or corporation, each officer or major stockholder must be fingerprinted and undergo the check. In addition to the

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

required background check, licensees must also fully disclose any civil judgment or conviction described below under penalty of false statement.

Under the act, the DMV commissioner may issue or renew a license only if he determines the (1) issuance or renewal to the applicant is likely to improve access to DMV services or manage the number of transactions done in person at DMV without compromising the integrity and security of the department's electronic system and (2) applicant is capable of ensuring control of and proper use of license plates and other materials the department provides for registration and title transactions. The DMV commissioner may refuse to grant or renew a license for any reason he reasonably deems necessary. It specifically authorizes him to refuse a license if the applicant or holder (or officer or major stockholder) has been found liable in a civil action or convicted of a violation of laws (1) related to the business of filing registration or title applications or (2) involving fraud, larceny, stalking, embezzlement, bribery, or deprivation or misappropriation of property.

Before refusing to grant or renew a license for any of the above reasons, DMV must notify the applicant or licensee and give them an opportunity for a hearing. Under prior law, DMV could remove a company's authorization for the electronic system under generally the same circumstances but was not required to provide opportunity for a hearing (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-15d-4).

Under the act, licenses are generally renewed biennially, but DMV must adopt an initial renewal schedule so that license renewals happen on a staggered basis. If the schedule causes a license to expire more or less than two years from its initial issuance, DMV may charge a prorated license fee.

At least 45 days before a company's license expires, DMV must send the company a renewal application in the way the commissioner determines. Licensees who do not file the renewal application with the \$250 license fee before their license expires are prohibited from using DMV's electronic system. Applications filed after the license expires are subject to a \$100 late fee. DMV may not renew an electronic issuance license that has been expired more than 45 days.

### *Surety Bonds*

Prior law required registration and title companies that are authorized to file applications electronically to provide surety bonds. The act retains this requirement for licensees and increases, from \$25,000 to \$45,000, the total amount of surety bonds they must provide.

Registration and title companies authorized under prior law had to provide surety bonds in the following amounts: (1) \$20,000 as security for monetary loss that DMV suffers as a result of the licensee's loss, destruction, or misuse of the license plates the department assigned the licensee and (2) \$5,000 as security for monetary loss DMV suffers because the licensee failed to remit registration and title fees (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-15d-3(b) & (c)).

The act codifies these bond requirements and, in addition to the bonds described above, requires licensees to furnish another \$20,000 bond conditioned on the licensee complying with applicable state and federal laws and regulations and provided as indemnity for any losses a customer sustains because the licensee did

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

not comply with these laws or regulations. This bond must be executed in the name of the state for the benefit of any aggrieved customer, but the penalty of the bond may only be imposed on the DMV commissioner's order after a hearing.

The act requires DMV to assess a \$200 administrative fee against any electronic issuance licensee that fails to show proof of bond renewal or replacement before an existing bond expires.

### *License Plate Inventory*

Under the act, as under prior law, DMV must issue to each licensee an inventory of license plates and other materials related to registration and title transactions. The company is responsible for all the license plates DMV assigns to it. The act specifies that licensees may use the plates and materials only for registration and title transactions.

The act specifically requires electronic issuance licensees who stop doing business to return license plates, title and registration materials, and any applications that it did not act on or complete. The licensee must do so within five business days of the license becoming invalid or the business terminating. Violations are infractions.

### *Submission of Applications to DMV*

As under existing law for registration and title companies, electronic issuance licensees must submit registration and title applications, along with necessary documents, within 10 days after electronically issuing a registration or title. The act specifies that if the licensee fails to provide DMV with the necessary documents, the department may not process the received documents and must inform the licensee that it failed to submit a completed application.

### *Consumer Protections and Required Disclosures*

The act establishes various consumer protections for customers of electronic issuance licensees. It caps the fee that licensees may charge their customers at \$25 for each registration or title application.

Under the act, a licensee may not (1) include the words "Department of Motor Vehicles" or "DMV" or another indication of the department in their business name or (2) act in any way that misleads customers to believe that the licensee represents or otherwise is affiliated with the department.

The act also requires electronic issuance licensees to give customers a disclosure form as the commissioner prescribes. The form must state (1) the fee that the licensee charges for filing registration and title applications, (2) that the licensee is not affiliated with the department, (3) information on how the customer may file complaints about the licensee with DMV, and (4) any other information DMV requires. Licensees must require customers to acknowledge the information by signing the form.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

### *Penalty*

The act allows DMV, after notice and opportunity for a hearing, to impose a civil penalty of up to \$2,000 for violations of the electronic issuance license laws, except for violations of the laws on (1) returning license plates and other materials, (2) timely submitting registration and title applications, (3) disclosure forms, and (4) the application fee cap.

### § 4 — MOTOR VEHICLE TRANSPORTER REGISTRATION

*Imposes a late fee for failing to timely renew a transporter registration and prohibits DMV from renewing one 45 days after expiration*

By law, motor vehicle transporters must annually renew their registrations by the last day of March. The act imposes a \$100 late fee for motor vehicle transporters that fail to renew their registration before expiration. It also prohibits the commissioner from renewing any transporter's registration once it has been expired for more than 45 days. After that timeframe, a person or entity would have to file an application for a new license.

### § 5 — DEALER AND REPAIRER BACKGROUND CHECKS

*Modifies the requirements for fingerprinting and background checks for applicants for a new or renewed motor vehicle dealer's or repairer's license*

The act modifies the requirements for fingerprinting and background checks for applicants for a new or renewed motor vehicle dealer's or repairer's license. Prior law required applicants to be fingerprinted and undergo a state and national criminal history records check no more than 30 days before submitting the application and submit the results of the check to DMV. The act eliminates the specified timeframe and no longer requires the applicant to submit the results of the check to DMV.

### § 6 — MOTOR VEHICLE RECYCLERS' SURETY BONDS

*Requires motor vehicle recyclers to furnish a \$25,000 surety bond*

The act imposes a surety bond requirement on motor vehicle recyclers, as is the case under existing law for other DMV-licensed businesses (e.g., dealers and repairers). Applicants seeking a new license or renewing one must furnish a \$25,000 surety bond, conditioned on the applicant or licensee complying with any state or federal law or regulation relating to the business of operating a motor vehicle recycler's yard and provided as indemnity for customers' losses due to licensee actions that constitute grounds for license suspension or revocation or the licensee going out of business. This bond must be executed in the name of the state for the benefit of any aggrieved customer, but the penalty of the bond may only be imposed on the DMV commissioner's order after a hearing.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act requires DMV to assess a \$200 administrative fee against any motor vehicle recycler that fails to show proof of bond renewal or replacement before an existing bond expires.

### §§ 7-9 — COMMERCIAL DRIVING SCHOOLS AND INSTRUCTORS

*Increases the surety bond amount for driving schools to \$50,000 per location, requires driving instructors to wear ID badges while providing instruction, and makes other changes related to driving school and instructor licensees*

#### *Surety Bond Increase*

Under DMV regulations, commercial driving schools must provide a cash deposit or surety bond to the commissioner in the amount of \$15,000 per location (i.e., place of business), up to \$100,000 per driving school license (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-78-22). The act instead sets the required surety bond amount for driving schools at \$50,000 per location with no cap. As under existing law, boards of education and public, private, or parochial schools conducting a driver education course according to state law are exempt from the surety bond requirement.

By law, these bonds are conditioned on the licensee's faithful performance of any contract to provide instruction and held by DMV to satisfy any execution issued against a school for its failure to adhere to the contract.

#### *School License Requirements and Additional Locations*

The act explicitly allows a driving school licensee to operate a school at an additional place of business, as long as they hold a license to operate at that location and comply with the state driving school laws. (Existing law implies this requirement by setting license fees for additional locations, and the department requires each location to be licensed in practice.)

#### *Instructor ID Badges and Background Checks*

The act requires licensed driving instructors or master instructors to wear an ID badge at all times when providing classroom or behind-the-wheel instruction. The employing driving school must issue the badge, which must contain the (1) licensee's name, photo, and license number; (2) license expiration date; and (3) driving school's name.

The act also requires instructor and master instructor licensees to be fingerprinted and undergo a state and national criminal history records check before their license is renewed. Under current regulations, applicants for renewal only have to undergo a state criminal records check (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-78-51). Under existing regulations and the act, applicants must also undergo a state child abuse and neglect registry check.

The act also requires renewal applicants to provide the same evidence they had to when applying initially, such as evidence that they held a driver's license for the past five years, passed a physical exam, and completed the required instructor

training.

*Schools' Responsibility for Instructors*

The act also specifies that a school employing a licensed instructor or master instructor is responsible for ensuring that they comply with driving school and driving instructor statutes and regulations (including that the instructor wears his or her ID badge).

*Expired Licenses*

By law, DMV is prohibited from renewing a driving school license, a driving instructor license, or a master instructor license if it has been expired for more than 60 days. The act explicitly allows the holder of one of these expired licenses to apply for a new license.

*Penalties*

By law, the DMV commissioner may suspend or revoke a license or impose a civil penalty (up to \$1,000 per violation) on any person or business that violates the driving school or instructor laws after notice and an opportunity for a hearing. The act explicitly allows him to impose these penalties for violations of the associated regulations.

The act also expands the commissioner's authority to require that restitution be made to a customer. Under existing law, he could require a licensee to do so; under the act, he may also require this of unlicensed people or firms.

§ 10 — ALTERED, COMPOSITE, GREY-MARKET, AND SALVAGE VEHICLES

*Requires that salvage vehicles be inspected by DMV-authorized repairers rather than DMV and defines the different categories of altered vehicles that must be inspected before titling and registering them*

Prior law established inspection requirements for vehicles that were (1) reconstructed (i.e., materially altered from the original by removing, adding, or substituting essential parts); (2) composed from several parts of other vehicles; (3) altered enough that the vehicle no longer bears the characteristics of a specific make of motor vehicle; or (4) declared a total loss by an insurance carrier and subsequently reconstructed.

The act instead breaks these vehicles out into four defined categories and indicates the inspection requirements for each. Principally, it changes who must inspect vehicles reconstructed after being declared a total loss by an insurer.

*Categories*

The act defines four types of vehicles: altered vehicles, composite vehicles,



## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

grey-market vehicles, and salvage vehicles.

An “altered vehicle” is one that has been materially modified from its original construction by removing, adding, or substituting essential parts with new or used parts.

A “composite vehicle” is one that (1) is composed or assembled from several parts of other vehicles; (2) is assembled from a motor vehicle kit; or (3) has been altered, assembled, or modified from the original manufacturer’s specifications.

A “grey-market vehicle” is one that is manufactured for use outside of the United States, imported into it, and not certified to meet federal safety or emissions standards at the time the vehicle was manufactured.

A “salvage vehicle” is one that was declared a total loss by an insurance carrier and subsequently reconstructed.

### *Inspection Requirements*

Existing law requires the vehicles generally falling under these four defined categories to be inspected to determine whether they are properly equipped and in good mechanical condition before they can be titled and registered. Under prior law, DMV had to conduct all of the inspections. The act instead requires that inspections of (1) altered, composite, and grey-market vehicles be performed at DMV (at an office the commissioner designates) and (2) salvage vehicles be performed by DMV-authorized licensed dealers or repairers.

The act also eliminates a prior requirement that DMV determine whether vehicles presented for inspection were in the possession of their lawful owner. But it retains a provision authorizing the commissioner to require someone presenting an altered, composite, grey-market, or salvage vehicle for inspection to show proof of lawful purchase of any major component parts that were not part of the vehicle when sold by the manufacturer.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

### §§ 11-32 & 39 — MINOR AND TECHNICAL CHANGES

*Makes numerous minor and technical changes, principally to change references to “commercial driver’s instruction permit” to “commercial learner’s permit,” conforming to the term used in federal law*

The act makes numerous minor and technical changes. It updates school bus terms to eliminate references to Type I and Type II school buses and instead refer to them by gross vehicle weight rating. It also updates an obsolete reference to the former Department of Public Safety.

Additionally, the act changes references to “commercial driver’s instruction permit” to “commercial learner’s permit,” conforming to the term used in federal law. It specifies that commercial driver’s instruction permits DMV issued before October 1, 2024, are valid until they expire.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024, except for the provisions updating school bus terms and replacing an obsolete reference, which take effect July 1, 2024.

### §§ 33-36 — LOW-SPEED VEHICLES

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

*Generally allows the operation of “low-speed vehicles” on roads with speed limits up to 25 mph and makes them “motor vehicles” under state motor vehicle laws (i.e., Title 14), generally subjecting them to the same requirements as other vehicles under these laws*

The act generally allows the operation of “low-speed vehicles” (LSVs) on highways (i.e., public roads) in the state with speed limits of 25 mph or less. Under the act and federal regulations, an LSV is a four-wheeled motor vehicle that has a (1) speed attainable in one mile of more than 20 mph but not more than 25 mph on a paved, level surface and (2) gross vehicle weight rating less than 3,000 pounds.

Under the act, LSVs are “motor vehicles” under state motor vehicle laws (i.e., Title 14 of the General Statutes). This means, among other things, that LSVs must be registered, titled, and insured; their drivers must hold a valid driver’s license; and businesses selling or repairing them must hold dealer or repairer licenses, respectively. Previously, DMV did not register LSVs, and they could not be driven on public roads. The act prohibits DMV from issuing a title for a homemade LSV or a golf cart that has been retrofitted from the original manufacturer’s specifications in an attempt to qualify as an LSV.

The act allows the Office of the State Traffic Administration and local traffic authorities to prohibit or limit LSV use on roads under their jurisdictions. It also requires that LSVs meet state motor vehicle equipment standards, except for those that are inapplicable to, or inconsistent with, the federal motor vehicle safety standards for LSVs (see *Background — Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for LSVs*). Violations of the road restrictions or equipment requirements are infractions (see [Table on Penalties](#)).

Lastly, the act makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

### *Background — Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for LSVs*

Under federal regulations, LSVs must satisfy certain requirements under specified testing conditions and be equipped with the following:

1. headlights, turn signals, tail lights, and brake lights;
2. reflex reflectors;
3. an exterior mirror on the driver’s side and either an exterior mirror on the passenger’s side or an interior mirror (in addition to meeting other specified rear visibility requirements);
4. a parking brake;
5. a windshield meeting federal standards on glazing materials;
6. a vehicle identification number (VIN) meeting federal requirements;
7. a seatbelt assembly meeting federal requirements; and
8. a pedestrian alert sound (49 C.F.R. § 571.500).

### § 37 — TOWING OCCUPIED VEHICLES

*Prohibits a licensed wrecker from knowingly allowing any person to occupy a vehicle while it is being towed*

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act prohibits a licensed wrecker from knowingly allowing any person to occupy a vehicle while it is being towed. As is the case under existing law for other provisions related to wreckers' towing and transporting of motor vehicles, a violation of this provision is (1) an infraction for a first offense and (2) a class D misdemeanor for subsequent offenses (see [Table on Penalties](#)).

### § 38 — SCHOOL BUS IDLING

*Requires the DMV commissioner, by September 1, 2024, to review, and amend or revise if needed, any regulations or policies on inspecting school buses to ensure they promote adherence to anti-idling laws*

The act requires the DMV commissioner, by September 1, 2024, to review, and amend or revise if needed, any regulation, internal procedure or policy, or other guidance DMV provides to school bus owners and operators on operating and inspecting school buses. Specifically, he must do so to ensure that these regulations and policies (1) promote adherence to the state's anti-idling law for school buses and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) air quality regulations related to idling and (2) do not explicitly or implicitly require a school bus to idle for more than three minutes during its daily vehicle inspection. (The anti-idling law generally prohibits school bus operators from idling their buses for more than three consecutive minutes and DEEP regulations similarly prohibit this for all vehicles; however, both allow certain exceptions.)

The act additionally requires the commissioner, by September 1, 2024, to (1) give guidance to school bus owners and operators on which aspects of a daily vehicle inspection can be done with the engine off and (2) post the guidance on DMV's website.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### § 40 — SCHOOL BUS SEAT BELTS

*Reestablishes and makes permanent a DMV school bus seat belt pilot program to provide 50% sales tax refunds for purchases of buses equipped with three-point seat belts*

Starting October 1, 2025, the act reestablishes and makes permanent a DMV school bus seat belt pilot program that ended on December 31, 2017. The program helps pay for school buses with three-point lap and shoulder seat belts by refunding school bus companies (i.e., "private carriers") half the sales tax they pay for buses on which these seat belts were installed during manufacture. Program funding comes from the existing school bus seat belt account, which is a non-lapsing General Fund account funded by a portion (\$50) of each DMV fee collected for restoring suspended licenses and registrations (CGS § 14-50b).

The act allows (1) school districts to apply to DMV, on a form the department provides, beginning October 1, 2025, and (2) bus companies to receive sales tax reimbursements from DMV for buses they purchase on or after this date, depending on the department's approval of the application and funding availability from the account. Under the act, the restarted program is generally unchanged, except for a

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

new requirement that DMV, in collaboration with the Department of Education, annually inform school districts about the program and how to apply.

The act also (1) requires the Transportation and Education committees to hold a joint public hearing on program participation and effectiveness during the 2030 legislative session (a public hearing was similarly required for the pilot program) and (2) eliminates an obsolete provision requiring these committees to recommend whether to continue the program.

Lastly, the act makes technical and conforming changes.  
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2025

### *School Bus Seat Belt Program and Account*

The school bus seat belt pilot program was active from July 1, 2011, to December 31, 2017. Under the program, school districts' applications to DMV must include a proposed agreement between the district and the school bus company contracted to transport the district's students. The agreement must (1) require that the company provide the school district with between 1 and 50 school buses, each equipped with three-point lap and shoulder seat belts, and (2) include a request by the company for funding.

Participating school districts must (1) give the parents or legal guardians of each student who uses a school bus written notice about the availability and proper use of the seat belts and (2) teach students how to properly use the seat belts, including fastening and unfastening them. The participating school districts, school bus companies, and school bus operators are exempt from liability for injuries caused solely by a student's use, misuse, or failure to use a seat belt installed under the program.

The program is funded by the school bus seat belt account, which has remained funded since its creation in 2010, even after the pilot program ended in 2017. The legislature transferred school bus seat belt account funds to the General Fund in several budget and deficit mitigation acts between 2012 and 2017.

### § 41 — WEIGHT TOLERANCE EXEMPTION FOR ELECTRIC COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

*Grants a weight tolerance exemption to primarily electric commercial motor vehicles driving on any road in the state, allowing them to exceed the state's various vehicle weight limits by up to 2,000 pounds; under federal law, the state must already provide this exemption when these vehicles are on the interstates and certain roads near them*

The act grants a weight tolerance exemption to primarily electric commercial motor vehicles traveling on any road in the state, allowing them to exceed the state's various vehicle weight limits by up to 2,000 pounds. Among other things, this increases the general maximum gross weight for these electric commercial vehicles from 80,000 pounds to 82,000 pounds. This exemption already applies to these vehicles when traveling on interstate highways and certain roads near them (see *Background — Federal Weight Exemption for Electric Commercial Vehicles*).

The act specifically requires officials and law enforcement officers who are

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

authorized to enforce the state’s vehicle weight limit restrictions to grant this exemption to any commercial motor vehicle powered primarily by electric battery. The exemption applies to the gross, total axle, total tandem, and bridge formula weight limits. Under existing law, the maximum gross vehicle weight allowed on Connecticut roads without an overweight permit is generally 80,000 pounds (subject to the requirements of the federal bridge formula weight limit). So, the act increases the maximum gross weight for electric commercial vehicles to 82,000 pounds.

The act’s exemption mirrors a federal exemption that the state must already comply with for vehicles on interstate highways. (Electric-powered units (i.e., truck tractors) on commercial vehicles are heavier than diesel-powered units because of the battery weight. Subject to the same weight limits, electric-powered tractor-trailers cannot carry as much cargo as diesel-powered ones.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

### *Background — Gross Vehicle Weight and Gross Vehicle Weight Rating*

By law, gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) is the manufacturer-specified maximum loaded weight of a single or combination (articulated) vehicle. The GVWR of a combination vehicle is the GVWR of the power unit plus the GVWR of the towed units. “Gross weight” is a vehicle’s light weight (unloaded weight) plus the weight of its load. For tractor-trailers, gross weight is the light weight of the tractor and the trailer plus the weight of its load (CGS § 14-1(41) & (42)).

### *Background — Federal Weight Exemption for Electric Commercial Vehicles*

Federal law allows vehicles powered primarily by electric battery to exceed the weight limit on the power unit by up to 2,000 pounds, up to a maximum gross vehicle weight of 82,000 pounds (23 U.S.C. § 127(s)). Federal Highway Administration guidance specifies that, in addition to the gross weight limit, these vehicles may also exceed the limits on the power unit for the single axle, tandem axle, and federal bridge formula maximum weights, as long as the total gross vehicle weight is not over 82,000 pounds. The guidance further confirms that states must allow this additional weight for electric-powered vehicles on the interstates and on roads that provide reasonable access from the interstates to food, fuel, repairs, and rest.

## § 42 — PICK-UP TRUCK PASSENGER REGISTRATION

*Makes pick-up trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating of 8,501 to 8,550 pounds eligible for a passenger registration if they are not used commercially (currently, they must be registered as combination vehicles); potentially allows them to access roads or other places that limit access by commercial traffic (e.g., state parkways)*

The act makes pick-up trucks with a GVWR of 8,501 to 8,550 pounds eligible for a passenger registration if they are not used commercially (see § 41 *Background — Gross Vehicle Weight and Gross Vehicle Weight Rating*).

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

By law, pick-up trucks with a GVWR of 12,500 pounds or less that are not used for commercial purposes must be registered as combination vehicles, unless they fall at or under the GVWR threshold for pick-up truck passenger registration. (A combination registration is the type issued to vehicles used for both private passenger and commercial purposes.) The act increases this threshold by 50 pounds, from 8,500 to 8,550 pounds. It also requires, rather than allows, the DMV commissioner to issue a passenger registration to qualifying pick-up trucks. As under existing law, pick-up trucks pay the weight-based fee that applies to commercial vehicles, regardless of whether they are registered as passenger, combination, or commercial vehicles.

By requiring noncommercial pick-up trucks with a GVWR of 8,501 to 8,550 pounds to be registered as passenger vehicles, the act potentially allows them to access roads or other places that limit access by commercial traffic. For example, vehicles with passenger registrations are generally permitted on state parkways (i.e., the Merritt, Wilbur Cross, and Milford parkways), but state regulations prohibit vehicles with combination registrations and a gross weight above 7,500 pounds from using these parkways (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-298-249(f)). Under the act, these pick-up trucks may use the parkways regardless of the vehicle's gross weight because they have passenger registrations.

Lastly, the act also makes technical and conforming changes.

### §§ 43-45 — ACCESSIBLE PARKING

*Modifies the conditions under which a health care professional may certify an applicant for an accessible parking windshield placard; prohibits health care professionals from making fees they charge to applicants seeking certification contingent on whether or not they certify the applicants' eligibility; eliminates the requirement that the Transportation Committee House chairperson's appointment to the Accessible Parking Advisory Council be a municipal planner*

The act makes changes to laws related to health care professionals' certification of eligibility for a DMV-issued accessible parking removable windshield placard. By law, applicants for windshield placards must submit certification from specified health care professionals (or certain government officials), signed under penalty of false statement, stating that the applicant (1) has a disability that limits or impairs the ability to walk, as defined under federal regulations; (2) is a veteran, as defined by state law, who has a certified, service-connected post-traumatic stress disorder and meets the federal disability definition; or (3) is legally blind.

The act requires health care professionals who certify placard applicants' eligibility to do so based on their professional opinion after completing a medically reasonable assessment of the applicant's medical history and current medical condition made in the course of a bona fide health care professional-patient relationship. It also prohibits these health care professionals from making fees they charge to placard applicants contingent on certifying that the applicant has an eligible disability and imposes a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 for violations.

Under the act, a "health care professional" is a licensed physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse; a psychiatrist employed by, or under contract with, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; or an

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

ophthalmologist or optometrist. This definition corresponds to the health care professionals already authorized to certify placard eligibility under existing law.

Separately, the act also eliminates the requirement that the Transportation Committee House chairperson's appointment to the Accessible Parking Advisory Council be a municipal planner.

Lastly, the act makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024, except the advisory council provision is effective upon passage.

### *Penalty for Contingent Fees and Agreements*

In addition to prohibiting health care professionals from charging certain contingent fees to placard applicants (see above), the act also prohibits them from entering into a written or oral agreement or understanding with a person using their services that actually or effectively makes the professional's commissions, fees, or charges contingent on certifying that the applicant has an eligible disability.

Under the act, violators of these provisions may face a civil penalty of up to \$1,000, and the attorney general, after receiving a complaint from the DMV commissioner, must institute a civil action to recover the penalty in the Superior Court for the Hartford judicial district.