
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5377

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE REEMPLOYMENT OF OLDER WORKERS AS THEY RELATE TO THE LABOR DEPARTMENT.

SUMMARY:

This bill creates or expands several initiatives for the state's unemployed workers. Among other things, it broadens eligibility for the Subsidized Training and Employment Program (STEP UP) by eliminating a residency-related requirement for certain subsidized employees. STEP UP provides eligible small businesses and small manufacturers with grants for a portion of an eligible employee's costs of employment, including training, during the first six months of his or her employment.

The bill also requires the Department of Labor (DOL) to lead initiatives for unemployed workers by (1) promoting the state's apprenticeship programs and (2) determining whether résumé writing assistance providers at the CT Works One Stop Career Centers should be credentialed (see BACKGROUND).

It creates initiatives specifically for unemployed older workers (those who are at least 50 years old), such as (1) requiring DOL to create a quick-reference guide of the resources available to older workers and (2) publicizing the benefits of hiring and retaining older workers on DOL's website.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2014

INITIATIVES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

STEP UP

Under current law, one component of STEP UP provides small business wage subsidy grants to eligible businesses that hire new

employees who meet certain requirements. The bill eliminates the requirement that the new employee live in a municipality with either (1) an unemployment rate at least as high as the state unemployment rate as of September 1, 2011 or (2) a population of at least 80,000. As under current law, the business can qualify for a grant only if the new employee is unemployed immediately before being hired and has a family income under 250% of the federal poverty level (currently \$59,625 per year for a family of four).

Apprenticeship Information

The bill requires DOL, by January 1, 2015, to develop or approve an annual information campaign describing its apprenticeship training program and addressing common misperceptions about it. (The bill does not specify these misperceptions.) It must also describe the opportunities and benefits that apprenticeship training could provide for the state's unemployed workers. DOL must distribute the informational campaign to Workforce Investment Boards, CT Works One Stop Career Centers, and similar job centers in the state.

Résumé Working Group

By January 1, 2015, the bill requires the labor commissioner to convene a working group that includes representatives from the state's Workforce Investment Boards, CT Works One Stop Career Centers, and similar job centers in the state. The group must determine whether workers at the One Stop Career Centers should have a certified professional résumé writer credential before they can provide résumé writing assistance to others. The group must make its determination by July 1, 2015.

OLDER UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

The bill requires DOL, by January 1, 2015, to develop or approve a one-page quick-reference guide summarizing (1) the public and private resources available to the state's unemployed older workers and (2) how an older worker can access these resources. Within available resources, DOL must ensure that the resources in the quick-reference guide are accessible through the "2-1-1 Infoline" program (a phone call service line and online database of community resources

administered by the United Way of Connecticut).

The bill requires the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) to coordinate an electronic state hiring campaign administered through DOL's Internet website. The campaign must encourage the reemployment of older workers and include testimony from employers inside and outside the state on the value of hiring and retaining older workers. CETC must submit a report on the campaign's status to the Labor Committee by January 1, 2015.

By law, CETC must annually submit to the governor a plan to coordinate the state's employment and training programs to promote comprehensive, individualized employment and training services. The bill requires that this plan also coordinate the programs to promote older workers' reemployment.

BACKGROUND

CT Works One Stop Career Centers

The federal Workforce Investment Act requires states receiving federal workforce development grants to, among other things, have a network of "one stop" offices to provide core employment-related services and access to other federally funded employment and training services. Connecticut has 17 such offices, known as CT Works Career Centers, which provide services for businesses and job seekers, including job search and career workshops; business seminars; computer labs and resource libraries; and copying, mailing, and faxing services.

Legislative History

The House referred the bill (File 210) to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, which reported a substitute that eliminates the prior bill's provisions (1) authorizing \$20 million in general obligation bonds to fund the STEP UP program in FY 15 and FY 16 and (2) requiring DOL to provide unemployed workers with access to online learning courses at the career centers.

Related Bills

SB 29, reported favorably by the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee authorizes \$10 million in general obligation bonds in FY 15 to fund the STEP UP program.

SB 64 (File 313), reported favorably by the Labor and Public Employees Committee, changes the date, from June 1 to January 31, that CETC must annually submit its plan to coordinate employment programs to the governor.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Program Review and Investigations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 11 Nay 0 (03/13/2014)

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 45 Nay 0 (04/11/2014)