AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR AND CONFORMING CHANGES TO STATUTES CONCERNING VETERANS.

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

Section 1. Subdivisions (2) to (4), inclusive, of subsection (b) of section 27-102l of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2017):

(2) (A) The [unit head] manager shall develop a training module on assisting and serving women veterans with regard to state or federal services or benefits and identifying and advising such veterans of community or nonprofit programs focused on assisting and serving such veterans. The [unit head] manager shall hold and provide instruction for an annual training session, in accordance with such module, to each veterans' services officer and any veterans' service contact person, as described in subsection (b) of section 27-135, or representative from an Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members center at a public institution of higher education in this state.

(B) At least one of the veterans' service officers shall be a woman having a demonstrated interest in the concerns of women veterans, who shall be responsible for addressing those concerns, and, effective
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upon the next opening of a veterans' service officer position occurring on or after July 1, 2010, at least two of the veterans' service officers shall be individuals having bilingual proficiency in English and Spanish, within existing authorized positions. Each veterans' service officer shall (i) successfully complete a course in veterans' benefits within one year of not later than one year after commencement of employment, (ii) attend the training session described in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, and (iii) be assigned to one of the five congressional districts of the state.

(3) The [unit] office staff shall, at least twice annually, conduct a training course for any city or town employee designated a veterans' service contact person pursuant to subsection (b) of section 27-135, as amended by this act. The [unit] office staff shall include in such training course a summary of state and federal services and benefits, the duties to be carried out by each veterans' service contact person, as described in subsection (a) of section 27-135, and any assistance the [unit] office staff may provide to any veterans' service contact person related to such duties.

(4) (A) The [veterans' advocacy and assistance unit] office shall develop a written outreach plan identifying (i) strategies for conducting outreach to veterans and their spouses, eligible dependents and family members for purposes of providing assistance in claims for veterans' services or benefits, and (ii) to the extent possible, specific events and other opportunities to provide such assistance that are sponsored by the [unit] office or in which the [unit] office is participating. The [unit] office shall update such written outreach plan as necessary to improve the efficacy of its outreach efforts.

(B) The [unit head] manager and each veterans' service officer shall electronically track information relating to outreach conducted or attended by the [unit] office, including, but not limited to, the title or type of any outreach event conducted or attended and the number of
veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members to whom substantive services or referrals were provided.

(C) The [unit] office shall utilize the notifications received from the administrator of each nursing home and assisted living facility in the state, pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of this section, to develop an annual schedule for each veterans' service officer to visit nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The [unit] office shall compile any information collected as a result of such visits and provide quarterly reports on such information to the Board of Trustees for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(D) The [unit] office shall provide quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees for the Department of Veterans Affairs on (i) concerns raised by veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members, which concerns shall be summarized by type, frequency and resolution, (ii) petitions filed by veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members received by the commissioner under section 27-102l(d)-54 of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies for the four preceding months, and (iii) copies of any such petitions.

Sec. 2. Subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of section 27-102l of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2017):

(2) To require that the administrator of each nursing home and assisted living facility in the state notify the [veterans' advocacy and assistance unit] Office of Advocacy and Assistance not later than April 1, 2017, and every six months thereafter, of any new resident in such nursing home or assisted living facility who is a veteran or a spouse, eligible dependent or family member of a veteran, provided each such nursing home or assisted living facility shall not release the identity of any such new resident to the [unit] office without the consent of the new resident. As used in this subdivision, "new resident" means a
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resident of whom such nursing home or assisted living facility has not previously notified the [veterans' advocacy and assistance unit] Office of Advocacy and Assistance;

Sec. 3. Subsection (b) of section 27-135 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2017):

(b) (1) Any city or town that has not established its own local veterans' advisory committee separate from one or more other cities or towns pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and does not otherwise provide funding for a veterans' service officer shall designate a city or town employee to serve as a veterans' service contact person in such city or town. The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall annually send to the chief executive officer of any such city or town an electronic notification of such chief executive officer's duty to so designate a city or town employee in accordance with this subsection. Such chief executive officer shall, not later than thirty days after receipt of such notification, submit to the [veterans' advocacy and assistance unit] Office of Advocacy and Assistance, as described in subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as amended by this act, the name and electronic mail address of the city or town employee so designated. As used in this subdivision, "chief executive officer" means the officer described in section 7-193.

(2) Any city or town employee designated as a veterans' service contact person shall carry out the duties described in subsection (a) of this section and shall complete a training course conducted by the [veterans' advocacy and assistance unit] Office of Advocacy and Assistance, as described in subdivision [(1)] (3) of subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as amended by this act, or attend a training session conducted by the [unit head] manager of said [unit] office, as described in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of said section. Each employee so designated prior to July 1, 2016, shall complete such
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training course prior to January 1, 2017. Each employee so designated on or after July 1, 2016, shall complete such training course not later than one year after the date of such designation. Upon completion of such training course, a veterans' service contact person may thereafter receive electronically any new or updated training information from the Office of Advocacy and Assistance and shall not be required to complete any other such training course.

Approved June 8, 2017