

# OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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## EMERGENCY CERTIFICATION

HB-7005

AN ACT CONCERNING A MUNICIPAL ELECTION MONITOR AT THE 2020 STATE ELECTION AND PROCESSING OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS FOR THE 2020 STATE ELECTION.

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### ***OFA Fiscal Note***

#### ***State Impact:***

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 21 \$	FY 22 \$
Secretary of the State	FF - Cost	See Below	None
Secretary of the State	FF - Potential Cost	See Below	None
Elections Enforcement Commission	GF - Potential Revenue Gain	See Below	None

Note: FF=Federal Funds; GF=General Fund

#### ***Municipal Impact:***

Municipalities	Effect	FY 21 \$	FY 22 \$
Various Municipalities	Potential Cost	See Below	None
Bridgeport	STATE MANDATE <sup>1</sup> - Potential Cost	See Below	None

### ***Explanation***

The bill requires any municipality with a population of at least 140,000 to have an election monitor for the 2020 state election and the Secretary of the State (SOS) to contract with such monitor until December 31, 2020, unless such contract is terminated prior to said

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<sup>1</sup> State mandate is defined in Sec. 2-32b(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, "state mandate" means any state initiated constitutional, statutory or executive action that requires a local government to establish, expand or modify its activities in such a way as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues.

date. The bill also requires such municipality to provide the monitor with office space, supplies, equipment, and services necessary to carry out duties and responsibilities.

Based on the 2018 Annual Town and County Population for Connecticut<sup>2</sup> produced by the Department of Public Health, only Bridgeport meets such population threshold.

The bill requires expenses related to the services of such election monitor to be paid from federal funds allocated to SOS to address the effects of COVID-19 on the conduct of elections. The cost of such a monitor is not known at this time and may be significant. The municipality may also incur costs associated with providing said monitor with office space, supplies, equipment, and other services.

Additionally, a potential revenue gain may be incurred if the State Elections Enforcement Commission levies civil penalties for certain violations as a result of this bill.

The bill also allows municipalities to conduct certain absentee ballot pre-counting procedures for the November 3, 2020 state election. If a municipality opts into such a process they must provide SOS a written certification in which SOS must approve or disapprove such certification and may require the appointment of additional absentee ballot counters.

It is anticipated that municipal costs incurred for and associated with such pre-counting process will be supported by the Absentee Ballot Support Grant. This grant is developed and administered by SOS with the use of federal Coronavirus, Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds totaling approximately \$1.4 million. The grant is intended to provide municipalities with the resources necessary to process, mail out and count absentee ballots for the 2020 state election.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/Population/Town-Pop/pop\\_towns2018pdf.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/Population/Town-Pop/pop_towns2018pdf.pdf)

Additionally, the bill outlines certain timeframes, deadlines, notifications, and procedures associated with pre-counting absentee ballots for the 2020 state election, requires municipalities opting into the pre-counting process to perform such process at a central location, alters certain timeframes for opening absentee ballot depository envelopes in the event of a recanvass, alters the deadline in which an elector who has submitted an absentee ballot can withdraw such ballot to vote in person for the 2020 state election, and makes other technical and conforming changes. These provisions are not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact to the state or municipalities.

### ***The Out Years***

The fiscal impacts identified above only apply to the 2020 state election, thus impacts will only be incurred in FY 21.

*The preceding Fiscal Impact statement is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for the purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does 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.*