
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 903

AN ACT CONCERNING THE LABOR DEPARTMENT'S RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO STATUTES CONCERNING APPRENTICESHIPS AND OTHER LABOR STATUTES.

SUMMARY

This bill modifies the definition of “preapprentice” under the Department of Labor’s (DOL) subsidized training and employment program for eligible small businesses and manufacturers. Specifically, it (1) expands the definition to include non-students ages 19 and older and (2) applies the definition to existing law on apprenticeship programs and the Connecticut State Apprenticeship Council (hereafter, “council”) (§§ 4 & 5). In doing so, it conforms to the definition in an existing statute that bans employing minors in certain hazardous occupations.

The bill also modifies the council’s duties and makes various minor and conforming changes to the apprenticeship laws (§§ 2, 6, 9-11).

Additionally, the bill:

1. modifies a labor commissioner annual reporting requirement to three legislative committees regarding the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) (§ 1);
2. modifies the unemployment compensation base period for claimants who are on workers’ compensation or sick or disability leave under an employer’s leave policy and eliminates the alternative base period for those claimants (§ 7);
3. allows unemployment claimants considered likely to exhaust their regular benefits to use the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RSEA) program, instead of a profiling system for job search assistance (§ 8); and

4. repeals a number of obsolete statutes, on, among other things, a job training coordinator position, a manpower study, the displaced homemakers program, training for ISO 9000 standards, and the Connecticut Low Wage Advisory Board (§§ 3, 12).

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except changes to the apprenticeship laws in §§ 9-11 are effective October 1, 2021.

§ 4 — PREAPPRENTICE DEFINITION

By law, DOL's subsidized training and employment program provides grants to help cover training costs and pay for the first 180 days of a new employee's ("preapprentice") job with an eligible small business or small manufacturer.

Under current law, a preapprentice must be either (1) a current high school, preparatory school, or higher education student or (2) age 18 or younger. The bill instead defines a preapprentice as a person, student, or minor. In doing so, it permits a non-student age 19 or older to participate in the program.

Under current law and unchanged by the bill, the preapprentice must be employed under a written agreement with an apprenticeship sponsor for a training and employment term no longer than 2,000 hours or 24 months in duration. The bill also requires the preapprentice to be registered with DOL.

§1 — CTECS MEETING REPORTING REQUIREMENT

By law, several state officials, including the labor commissioner, must meet each year with the Education, Higher Education and Employment Advancement, and Labor and Public Employees committees to discuss, among other things, the state's workforce needs, economic and occupational trends, and the employment status of graduates of CTECS high schools (formerly known as the technical high school system).

The bill requires the labor commissioner to provide information identifying emerging regional, state, and national workforce needs over the next 10 years, instead of the next 30 years, as under current law.

§§ 2, 6, & 9-11 — STATE APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL

Current law requires (1) the council to formulate policies to administer the apprenticeship statutes and (2) all apprenticeship programs to register with the council. The bill instead requires the council to assist in recommending policies to DOL and requires all programs to register with DOL. Additionally, the bill authorizes the council to recommend minimum apprenticeship standards, rather than adopt recommendations for these standards.

The bill also removes references to the council and replaces them with DOL in several statutes.

§ 7 — UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BASE PERIOD

By law, unemployment compensation is based in part on the claimant's work base period before becoming unemployed. Under current law, the base period for claimants who are also receiving workers' compensation benefits, or who are properly absent from work under the employer's sick leave or disability leave policy, is the first four of the five most recently worked quarters. The bill instead makes the claimant's work base period the four consecutive quarters immediately preceding the most recently worked quarter. Under current law, the quarters are not required to be consecutive, thus allowing an employee who was in and out of work over a period of time to use quarters from over a longer period.

The bill also changes a claimant's work base period in the same manner for the alternative base period, which is used if a claimant is ineligible under the base period described above. In doing so, it eliminates an alternative base period for claimants receiving workers' compensation or who are out of work on an employer's leave policy.

Under current law, the alternative base period uses the four most

recently worked calendar quarters for claimants who are receiving workers' compensation benefits or who are absent from work under the employer's sick or disability leave policy. The bill changes this period to the four consecutive quarters immediately preceding the most recently worked quarter, thus it matches the bill's change for the standard base period.

§ 8 — RSEA AND EMPLOYMENT SEARCH ASSISTANCE

Under current law, unemployment claimants must participate in reemployment services in order to continue to receive benefits. Claimants considered likely to exhaust their regular benefits must also use a reemployment profiling system, unless they have already used it or have justifiable cause for not participating. The bill additionally allows claimants to use RSEA as an alternative to the profiling system.

The bill also requires the commissioner to adopt regulations to administer the RSEA.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 13 Nay 0 (03/18/2021)