

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 21-141—sSB 903

Labor and Public Employees Committee

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

SUMMARY: This act 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 those age 19 and older who are not students 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 act also places more control of apprenticeship programs under DOL rather than the council and makes various minor and conforming changes to the apprenticeship laws (§§ 2, 6 & 9-11).

Additionally, the act:

1. modifies a labor commissioner annual reporting requirement to three legislative committees on 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).

It 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

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(“preapprentice’s”) job with an eligible small business or small manufacturer.

Under prior law, a preapprentice was either (1) a current high school, preparatory school, or higher education student or (2) age 18 or younger. The act 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.

By law and unchanged by the act, 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 act 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 annually 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 act 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 prior law.

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

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

The act also makes related conforming changes by replacing references to the council 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 prior 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, was the first four of the five most recently worked quarters. The act instead makes the claimant’s work base period the four consecutive quarters immediately preceding the most recently worked quarter. Under prior law, the quarters were 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 act 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

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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 since the act changes the period to the four consecutive quarters immediately preceding the most recently worked quarter. Under prior law, the alternative base period used 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.

§ 8 — RSEA AND EMPLOYMENT SEARCH ASSISTANCE

By 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 act additionally allows claimants to use RSEA as an alternative to the profiling system.

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