



PA 22-101—sHB 5301

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING IN-STATE STUDENT STATUS OF VETERANS, A POSTSECONDARY PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM OFFICE, THE ROBERTA B. WILLIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS AND CHILD CARE CENTERS ON OR NEAR COLLEGE CAMPUSES

SUMMARY: This act makes various changes in the laws governing workforce development and postsecondary education. Principally, it does the following:

1. entitles certain veterans and dependents of armed forces members living in Connecticut to in-state college tuition rates regardless of their state of residence (§ 1);
2. reduces the membership of the task force studying the costs and benefits of establishing a postsecondary prison education program office and extends its reporting deadline and termination date generally by one year (§ 2);
3. establishes a 10-member task force to recommend changes to the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program (§ 3);
4. creates various requirements to assess and address student food insecurity at the state’s public colleges and universities (§§ 4-7); and
5. requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) to develop a plan to increase the number of child care facilities on or near each regional community-technical college and state university campus (§ 8).

The act also makes several technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022, except the provisions about the two task forces are effective upon passage.

§ 1 — IN-STATE TUITION RATES FOR VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS OF ARMED FORCES MEMBERS

The act expands entitlement to in-state student tuition rates at the state’s public colleges and universities to the following three classes of people who live in Connecticut, regardless of their state of residence:

1. “veterans,” which the act defines as any person discharged or released, under conditions other than dishonorable, from at least 90 days of active service in the armed forces;
2. certain people entitled to educational assistance pursuant to the federal Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship; and
3. specific individuals entitled to transferred educational assistance pursuant to the federal Post-9/11 G.I. Bill (a.k.a. the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008).

For those eligible through the Fry Scholarship, the act applies to the child or

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

spouse of someone who, on or after September 11, 2001, dies in the line of duty while serving on active duty as an armed forces member (38 U.S.C. § 3311(b)(8)). By law, a spouse’s entitlement expires on the date the spouse remarries or 15 years after the member died, whichever is earlier (38 U.S.C. § 3311(f)(2)). Additionally, a “child” includes a married person or someone who is above the age of 23 years (38 U.S.C. § 3311(f)(5)).

For those eligible through the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, the act applies to dependents of someone who, at the time a transfer request is approved, generally has completed at least six years of armed forces service and enters into an agreement to serve at least four more years as a uniformed services member (38 U.S.C. § 3319). By law, a “dependent” is generally the member’s spouse and certain eligible children (38 U.S.C. § 3319(c)(2) & 10 U.S.C. § 1072(2)).

§ 2 — POSTSECONDARY PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM OFFICE TASK FORCE

The act reduces, from 16 to 10, the membership of the task force to study the costs and benefits of establishing a Postsecondary Prison Education Program Office within the Department of Correction (DOC). It does so by reducing the number of appointments by each legislative leader by one. By law, the task force must study at least nine topics, including space demands for prison education programming in correctional facilities; processes and standards for approving these programs, their curricula, and course materials; and other state and county correctional agencies’ strategies for increasing the number of people who can access these programs using federal Pell grants.

By law and unchanged by the act, the Office of Policy and Management’s undersecretary for criminal justice and the DOC commissioner, or their respective designees, are task force members. The table below outlines the membership reduction for each appointing authority.

Task Force Membership Reduction Under the Act

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number of Appointees Under PA 21-132</i>	<i>Number of Appointees Under the Act</i>
House speaker	Three	Two
Senate president pro tempore	Three	Two
House majority leader	Two	One
Senate majority leader	Two	One
House minority leader	Two	One
Senate minority leader	Two	One

Under the act, the appointing authorities must make their appointments within 30 days after the act’s passage (i.e., by June 23, 2022) and fill any vacancies. Appointed members may be legislators.

By law, the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must choose the

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

task force chairpersons from among its membership. Under the act, these chairpersons must schedule the task force's first meeting, which must occur within 60 days after the act's passage (i.e., by July 23, 2022). The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's administrative staff serves as the task force staff.

The act extends the deadline by which the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Higher Education and Judiciary committees by one year, from January 1, 2022, to January 1, 2023. Correspondingly, the act requires the task force to terminate on the date it submits the final report or January 1, 2023, whichever is later, rather than January 1, 2022, as under prior law.

§ 3 — ROBERTA B. WILLIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TASK FORCE

The act establishes a 10-member task force to recommend changes to the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program, which provides merit- and need-based financial assistance to Connecticut undergraduate students attending a two- or four-year college or university in the state.

Scope

Under the act, the task force must propose changes in the program that, at a minimum, do the following:

1. provide need-based financial aid to Connecticut residents enrolled at public and independent higher education institutions that (a) promotes access and choice to postsecondary education and (b) focuses on the student,
2. ensure prospective and current students are notified of their initial eligibility for a grant based on their completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) without requiring them to also apply to the Office of Higher Education (OHE),
3. annually ensure participating public and independent higher education institutions are aware of the initial student eligibility criteria and corresponding grant award amount for the following academic year on or before December 1 prior to the grant year, and
4. consider the feasibility of private occupational schools' participation in the program and estimate the cost of providing need- and merit-based grants or need-based grants for the eligible educational costs of state residents attending those schools.

Membership

Under the act, the task force must have the following 10 members:

1. two each appointed by the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore,
2. one each appointed by the House and Senate majority leaders,
3. one each appointed by the House and Senate minority leaders,
4. the Chief Workforce Officer or her designee, and
5. the OHE executive director or his designee.

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act allows any members appointed by legislative leaders to be General Assembly members. Additionally, it requires all appointments to be made within 30 days after the act's passage (i.e., by June 23, 2022) and any vacancy to be filled by the appointing authority.

Leadership, Staff, and Deadlines

The act requires the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore to choose the task force chairpersons from among its members. These chairpersons must schedule the task force's first meeting, which must be held within 60 days after the act's passage (i.e., by July 23, 2022). The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's administrative staff must serve as the task force staff.

Under the act, the task force must report its recommendations to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee by January 1, 2023. The task force terminates on this date or the date it submits the report, whichever is later.

§§ 4-7 — FOOD-INSECURE STUDENTS AT PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Food Insecurity Student Surveys

The act establishes various requirements to assess and address food insecurity for the state's public college and university students. It defines "food insecurity" and "food insecure" as the lack of financial resources needed to consistently access enough food for an active and healthy life. Specifically, it requires each public college and university to do the following:

1. starting by March 1, 2023, and biennially afterwards, administer a survey to enrolled students to collect data on the number of students who are food insecure and the causes and reasons for that;
2. starting by October 1, 2023, and biennially afterwards, evaluate their services and programs addressing the needs of food-insecure students and, based on the survey results, amend their existing services and programs or establish a new service or program to address these needs; and
3. starting by January 1, 2024, and biennially afterwards, report to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on the (a) survey results; (b) food insecurity services and programs offered, including any changes made based on the survey results; and (c) number of students who used the services and programs in the preceding two years.

Under the act, the survey must include questions about a student's (1) demographic background, including age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, marital status, income, education, and employment; (2) specific barriers to food access; and (3) awareness or use of community or institutional resources to address food insecurity and barriers to accessing these resources.

The act allows the services or programs that public colleges and universities modify or establish to address student food insecurity to include the following:

1. giving assistance and support for students to enroll in the Supplemental

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or any other state or federal nutrition assistance or financial aid program, including programs for families, if applicable;

2. providing low-cost food or meal plan options on campus;
3. allowing students additional meals through extra card swipes on meal plans;
4. providing financial assistance or other financial student aid;
5. establishing or expanding on-campus food pantries; and
6. starting a “fruit and vegetable incentive program” (i.e., a program that offers participants matching funds to purchase fruits and vegetables in any increment relative to their cost) or making one available through an agreement with a community nonprofit organization or government agency.

The act requires each institution, when amending or establishing services and programs based on survey results, to set a goal of serving at least 10% of the students identified in the survey as being food insecure.

SNAP Availability for Public College and University Students

Beginning July 1, 2023, and annually afterwards, the act requires BOR and the UConn Board of Trustees (BOT) to consult with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to (1) identify which, if any, of their offered educational programs qualify as an employment and training program that increases a student’s employability and complies with the requirements for a SNAP exemption (see BACKGROUND) and (2) maximize the number and types of these employment and training programs offered. Relatedly, the act allows the state’s public colleges and universities to consult with DSS to identify these programs. By January 1, 2024, BOR, BOT, and DSS must each post and regularly update on their respective websites a list of the identified programs offered.

The act also requires each public higher education institution to annually notify students about SNAP by any means of communication, including by email. This notice must include (1) the program’s eligibility requirements, (2) the program’s application process, and (3) where to obtain assistance in completing an application for the program.

Additionally, the act requires DSS, when determining SNAP eligibility and to the extent allowed by federal law, to consider an enrolled state public college or university student to be participating in a state or federally financed work-study program as soon as the student is approved for the program as part of his or her financial aid package, regardless of whether the student has received his or her work-study program assignment yet. Under federal law, students are eligible to receive SNAP benefits if they are actively participating in a state- or federally-funded work-study program (see BACKGROUND).

§ 8 — CHILD CARE FACILITIES NEAR REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGE AND STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

The act requires BOR, in consultation with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), to develop a plan to increase the number of OEC-licensed child care

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

facilities (i.e., child care centers or group child care homes) on or near each regional community-technical college and state university campus. The plan must include (1) the development, expansion, and maintenance of these facilities that (a) are used by an early childhood education program for instructional purposes or (b) provide evening and weekend child care services in accordance with college or university course schedules and (2) an estimated budget and implementation timeline for the development of additional child care facilities.

Under the act, the plan's goals are the following:

1. provide quality child care services for the staff, students, and surrounding community of each campus;
2. address the child care needs of nontraditional students; and
3. foster relationships between the colleges and universities and their surrounding communities.

The act requires BOR to submit the developed plan to the Appropriations and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees by January 1, 2023.

BACKGROUND

Student Eligibility for SNAP

Students enrolled at least half-time at a higher education institution are generally ineligible for SNAP unless they qualify for an exemption. These exemptions include participating in (1) a state- or federally-financed work-study program during the regular school year or (2) an eligible employment and training program (7 C.F.R. § 273.5).

A student participating in a state- or federally-financed work-study program is eligible for SNAP under the exemption if (1) he or she is approved for work-study at the time of application for SNAP benefits, (2) the work-study is approved for the school term, and (3) he or she anticipates actually working during that time. The exemption begins the month the school term starts or the month the work-study is approved, whichever is later (7 C.F.R. § 273.5(b)(6)).