
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5136

AN ACT ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF HOUSING-INSECURE STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes various requirements to assess and address housing insecurity for the state's public college and university students. It defines "housing insecurity" as the lack of security caused by high housing costs relative to income, poor housing quality, unstable neighborhoods, overcrowding, or moving frequently.

Specifically, the bill requires public colleges and universities to do the following:

1. starting by the fall 2023 semester, annually administer a survey to enrolled students to collect data on the number of students who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity;
2. based on the survey results, amend existing services or programs or establish new services or programs to address the needs of these students;
3. within available appropriations, provide grants or other financial assistance to these students to use for housing costs when (a) classes are in session and (b) the institution is closed for more than seven days; and
4. provide additional resources and supports to these students, including, among other things, financial assistance for related medical care and mental health counseling and a support team of students, faculty, and staff.

Additionally, the bill requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) and the UConn Board of Trustees (BOT), by January 1,

2023, to develop and adopt a policy on students who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity. When doing so, the boards must consult with students, institutional staff and faculty, and local and state organizations with subject matter expertise in homelessness and housing insecurity. The boards must also annually review and update the policy as they deem necessary and after considering survey results.

Lastly, the bill requires BOR and BOT, starting by February 1, 2023, to annually report to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on the (1) adopted policy on student homelessness and housing security and (2) status of implementing the services and resources required under the bill.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

HOUSING INSECURITY SURVEY

Under the bill, each public college and university must annually administer, starting by the fall 2023 semester, a survey to enrolled students to collect data on the number of students who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity and the associated causes and reasons.

Specifically, 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 housing access; and (3) awareness or use of community or institutional resources to address homelessness and housing insecurity and barriers to accessing these resources.

ADDITIONAL STUDENT RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

The bill requires each public higher education institution to:

1. (a) establish a team of students and institutional staff and faculty that is responsible for working with and supporting students who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity, and (b) provide them with information about appropriate housing and mental health resources upon graduation;
2. employ a staff member who serves as a liaison for the institution

and whose duties include identifying appropriate housing and mental health resources available to these students and using trauma-informed practices to mentor them;

3. employ an additional staff member to serve as a liaison for the institution's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity;
4. provide trainings on trauma-informed practices to enable the institution's staff and faculty to more adequately respond to students who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity; and
5. provide or offer financial assistance for students to receive medical care and mental health counseling to address issues surrounding their homelessness or housing insecurity.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 20 Nay 3 (03/03/2022)