
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5428

AN ACT CONCERNING BUILDING OFFICIALS, RESOURCES RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE BUILDING CODE AND THE PROMOTION OF CAREERS IN RELATED FIELDS.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to establish a pilot program, by January 1, 2023, to provide building inspection services on a regional basis through a regional council of governments (COG) or a combination of COGs. Under the bill, a COG or a combination of them may apply to OPM to participate in the program. The secretary must select three applicants, based on criteria he must establish, and enter into a memorandum of agreement with each. Program participants may retain one or more building officials to provide services in their regions and may receive up to \$250,000 each from the regional planning incentive account. The bill requires OPM and program participants to comply with certain reporting requirements.

The bill also establishes three additional reporting requirements. It requires, by January 1, 2023:

1. a working group the bill creates to develop and report on a system to digitize and store records related to the State Building Code;
2. the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) commissioner to study and report on options to allow reciprocal licensure for building officials licensed in other jurisdictions; and
3. the DAS and Office of Higher Education commissioners to study and report on options for providing certain education, training, and incentives to students pursuing careers as building inspectors.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the regional planning incentive account grant provision is effective July 1, 2022 (§2).

§§ 1 & 2 — REGIONAL BUILDING INSPECTION PILOT PROGRAM

The bill requires OPM to establish a pilot program by January 1, 2023, for a COG or a combination of them to provide building inspection services on a regional basis.

Existing law generally allows building inspectors to provide regional inspection services. By law, two or more municipalities may appoint a shared building inspector (CGS § 29-260(a)). And municipalities may enter into agreements with COGs allowing the COG to perform any service or activity that the municipality can provide (CGS § 8-31b).

Application Criteria

The bill requires the OPM secretary to develop application criteria and select applicants based on them. In developing the criteria, the secretary must consider, as demonstrated:

1. a particular area's need for regional building inspection services;
2. the extent to which the towns, cities, or boroughs that are COG members can meet their building inspection needs;
3. members' commitment to providing regional building inspection services; and
4. members' use of any Department of Labor-administered apprenticeship program related to administering the State Building Code.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

The OPM secretary must select three applicants, which may be COGs or combinations of COGs, and enter a MOU with each within 60 days after selecting them. At minimum, the MOU must include the:

1. program's hours and required staff,
2. software to be used,

3. requirements for progress reports to the OPM secretary, and
4. metrics to measure the program's success.

Grants from Regional Planning Incentive Account

Under the bill, up to \$250,000 from the regional planning incentive account may be given to each of the pilot program participants for FYs 23 and 24. Under existing law, funds from this account are first spent on regional service grants to COGs and then on Regional Performance Incentive Program grants. The bill creates an exception to provide funds to the pilot program but does not specify the priority of payments.

Pilot Program Reporting Requirements

The bill requires program participants to submit an annual report, beginning by January 1, 2024, to the OPM secretary on the measures they took under the pilot program during the prior year and those they expect to take during the next year. It also requires the OPM secretary to submit an annual report, beginning by February 1, 2024, to the Planning and Development Committee on the pilot program's status and any recommendations for legislation on the program.

§§ 3-5 — STUDIES AND REPORTS

Working Group on Digitization of State Building Code Records

The bill requires the DAS commissioner to convene a working group to develop a standardized system for (1) scanning or digitizing records related to the State Building Code and (2) storing them in a publicly available, searchable online database. The working group must (1) identify funding sources to create and maintain the system and (2) consider best practices for using various digital file types, security protocols for their storage, and backing-up and recovering them.

The working group is composed of the state librarian and representatives of:

1. the Connecticut Association of Zoning Enforcement Officials,
2. the Connecticut Building Officials Association,

3. two COGs,
4. the Connecticut Business and Industry Association,
5. the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut,
6. the Connecticut Construction Industries Association,
7. the Connecticut Town Clerks Association,
8. the Connecticut Data Collaborative, and
9. the Connecticut Association of Municipal Attorneys.

The working group must submit a report to the Planning and Development Committee by January 1, 2023, on its findings and legislative recommendations to implement the standardized system the working group develops.

Study on Reciprocal Licensing

The bill requires the DAS commissioner, in consultation with the state building inspector and Connecticut Building Officials Association, to study options to develop a pathway for building officials licensed in other jurisdictions to get reciprocal licensure in this state. The DAS commissioner must submit a report to the Planning and Development Committee by January 1, 2023, on her findings and legislative recommendations to implement reciprocal licensure.

Study on Training and Education Programs for Prospective Building Inspectors

The bill requires the DAS commissioner and Office of Higher Education commissioner (presumably, the executive director) to study options for:

1. expanding community college coursework and programs to train students pursuing jobs as building officials;
 2. financial and other incentives for students to pursue these jobs;
- and

3. internship and apprenticeship programs, in cooperation with COGs and municipalities, for these students.

In conducting the study, the commissioners must consult with the Connecticut Building Officials Association and at least one of the regional community-technical college system administrators. The commissioners must submit a report to the Planning and Development Committee by January 1, 2023, on their findings and any legislative recommendations.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 25 Nay 1 (03/25/2022)