
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5441 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING CLINICAL PLACEMENTS FOR NURSING STUDENTS, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS FOR TEACHERS, REPORTING BY THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE STRATEGY, PROMOTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY AND A STUDENT LOAN SUBSIDY FOR HIGH-DEMAND PROFESSIONS.

SUMMARY

This bill makes various unrelated changes affecting higher education statutes and programs. Principally, it does the following:

1. creates an 11-member task force to develop a plan to establish clinical placements at state facilities for nursing students at public and private higher education institutions (§ 1);
2. makes permanent a provision due to sunset under current law on October 1, 2025, that requires the Chief Workforce Officer to annually report to the governor and certain legislative committees on the Office of Workforce Strategy's workforce training programs (§ 2);
3. requires the insurance commissioner to promote the development and growth of, and employment opportunities within, the state's insurance industry (§ 3);
4. extends eligibility to the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority's (CHESLA) Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program to paraeducators and counselors, and makes conforming changes (§§ 4-5);
5. requires CHESLA to establish a Police Officer Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible police officers employed in distressed municipalities (§ 6); and

6. amends sHB 6689 of the current session to expand a CHESLA loan subsidy program for specified health care professionals to also include emergency services professionals (§§ 7-8).

*House Amendment "A" eliminates provisions (1) creating a state income tax credit for certain licensed health care providers who provide clinical placements for nursing students as part of an agreement with higher education institutions, (2) requiring the Office of Higher Education executive director and the labor and education commissioners to jointly develop a plan to establish a registered apprenticeship program to allow certain students to work as apprentice teacher's aides, and (3) requiring CHESLA to establish a Student Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on authority loans to eligible individuals employed in high demand professions. The amendment also (1) adds members to the task force and expands its charge to cover clinical placements at private institutions and (2) adds the provisions (a) modifying the Alliance District Teacher Student Loan Subsidy program, (b) establishing a loan subsidy program for police officers employed by distressed municipalities, and (c) amending provisions in sHB 6689 of the current session.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023, except the police officer student loan subsidy program provisions take effect on January 1, 2024, and the task force provision is effective upon passage.

§ 1 — NURSING STUDENT CLINICAL PLACEMENT TASK FORCE

Duties

The bill creates a task force to develop a plan to establish clinical placements for nursing students at public and private colleges and universities. In developing the plan, the bill requires the task force to examine the following:

1. the types of state facilities that can accommodate these clinical placements, including state correctional facilities and facilities operated by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS);

2. the number and type of clinical placements that may be established at each state facility;
3. the staffing requirements for providing the clinical placements and the facilities' compliance with them; and
4. the total and per-student cost to state facilities to provide the clinical placements.

Membership

The task force includes six members appointed by the six legislative leaders. The table below lists the appointees' qualifications and appointing authorities. Members appointed by the legislative leaders may be legislators.

Table: Task Force Membership

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number of Appointments</i>	<i>Appointee Qualifications</i>
House speaker	One	Nursing education program administrator at UConn
Senate president pro tempore	One	Nursing education program administrator at an independent higher education institution
House majority leader	One	Nursing education program administrator at a state university within the Connecticut State University System
Senate majority leader	One	Nursing education program administrator at a regional community-technical college
House minority leader	One	Nursing education program administrator at an independent higher education institution
Senate minority leader	One	Nursing education program administrator at UConn Health Center
Department of Corrections (DOC) commissioner	One	Licensed medical provider employed by DOC
Department of Public Health (DPH) commissioner	One	Registered nurse employed by DPH
DMHAS commissioner	One	Registered nurse employed by DMHAS

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number of Appointments</i>	<i>Appointee Qualifications</i>
DDS commissioner	One	Registered nurse employed by DDS
DCF commissioner	One	Registered nurse employed by DCF

The bill requires appointing authorities to make their initial appointments within 30 days of the bill's passage and fill any vacancies.

Leadership, Staff, and Meetings

Under the bill, the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the task force chairpersons from among its members. The chairpersons must schedule the task force's first meeting to be held within 60 days after the bill's passage.

The bill requires the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's administrative staff to serve in this capacity for the task force.

Report

The bill requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee by January 1, 2024. It terminates on this date or the date it submits the report, whichever is later.

§ 2 — OFFICE OF WORKFORCE STRATEGY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The bill makes permanent the requirement that the chief workforce officer annually report to the governor and the Commerce; Education; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; Higher Education and Employment Advancement; and Labor and Public Employees committees on Office of Workforce Strategy workforce training programs. Under current law, the reporting requirement sunsets on October 1, 2025.

Under the bill and existing law, the report must include information on the number, demographics, and outcomes of program participants.

§§ 4-5 — ALLIANCE DISTRICT EDUCATOR AND COUNSELOR LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM

The bill requires CHESLA to extend eligibility for the Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program to paraeducators and school counselors and renames the program the “Alliance District Educator and Counselor Loan Subsidy Program.” As under current law, this program provides subsidized interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible borrowers employed in alliance districts, subject to available funding.

§ 6 — CHESLA POLICE OFFICER LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM

The bill requires CHESLA, by July 1, 2024, to establish a Police Officer Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible sworn members of municipal police departments (“police officers”) employed in distressed municipalities (see BACKGROUND), subject to available funding.

The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) annually designates distressed municipalities based on high unemployment and poverty, aging housing stock, and low or declining rates of job, population, and per capita income growth (CGS § 32-9p). Under the bill, CHESLA must establish a separate, non-lapsing account to hold program funds required by law to be deposited there, including any state appropriation or bond sale proceeds.

Eligibility Criteria and Administrative Guidelines

The bill requires CHESLA to establish the program’s eligibility criteria and administrative guidelines in consultation with the Police Officer Standards Training Council. Under the bill, the criteria and guidelines must address at least the following:

1. applicant eligibility,
2. interest rate subsidies and principal limits on authority loans subject to the loan subsidy program,
3. the process for verifying applicants’ employment, and
4. the requirement that an interest rate subsidy through the

program terminates for a subsidy recipient who no longer meets the program's employment requirements during the loan's term.

Account Expenditure Guidelines

CHESLA must use the funds in the program account to subsidize loans under the program. In addition, CHESLA must spend account funds to cover (1) reasonable and necessary expenses for program administration, (2) the issuance of authority loans to refinance one or more eligible loans, and (3) a reserve for any losses from issuing authority loans.

By law and unchanged by the bill, "authority loans" are education loans by CHESLA or CHESLA loans from the proceeds of bonds to fund education loans. "Eligible loans" are loans in repayment that were issued by (1) CHESLA or (2) another private or governmental lender to finance college or university attendance.

§§ 7 & 8 — CHESLA LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM FOR SPECIFIED HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

sHB 6689 of the current session requires CHESLA to establish a Nursing and Mental Health Care Professionals Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA refinancing loans to certain Connecticut-licensed nurses, nurse's aides, psychologists, marital and family therapists, clinical and master social workers, and professional counselors. This bill amends sHB 6689 to expand the program to emergency medical service (EMS) professionals and makes various conforming changes. Under the bill, to qualify, the EMS professional must (1) be DPH-certified as an emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, or advanced emergency medical technician and (2) meet the program's eligibility criteria and administrative guidelines set by CHESLA and the education commissioner.

BACKGROUND

Distressed Municipalities

DECD annually designates distressed municipalities based on high unemployment and poverty, aging housing stock, and low or declining

rates of job, population, and per capita income growth (CGS § 32-9p). The current (2022) distressed municipalities are Ansonia, Bridgeport, Bristol, Chaplin, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, Griswold, Groton, Hartford, Meriden, Montville, New Britain, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Plainfield, Putnam, Sprague, Sterling, Torrington, Waterbury, West Haven, Winchester, and Windham.

Related Bill

HB 5437 (File 263), favorably reported by the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, requires CHESLA to establish a student loan subsidy program to offer subsidized interest rates on loans it makes to first responders.

sHB 6689 (File 185), favorably reported by the Banking Committee, establishes a Nursing and Mental Health Care Professionals Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA refinancing loans to certain Connecticut-licensed nurses, nurse’s aides, psychologists, marital and family therapists, clinical and master social workers, and professional counselors.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 22 Nay 0 (03/14/2023)