
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 407 (File 352, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT GRANTING VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STUDENTS ACCESS TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a 10-member task force to study workers' compensation coverage for students of regional agricultural science and technology education centers (i.e., "regional vo-ag centers") who are enrolled in (1) an approved public work-study program as defined by the commissioners of education and labor or a Connecticut Career Certification Program or (2) an internship, as defined in state law. The study must examine the current policies and practices of regional vo-ag centers regarding workers' compensation coverage for these students and potential changes to state law concerning workers' compensation coverage for them.

Under the workers' compensation law, an "employee" includes any person who has entered into or works under any contract or apprenticeship with an employer (CGS § 31-275(9)(A)). It appears that students in a work-study program, the career certification program, or a paid internship are already covered by workers' compensation (see BACKGROUND).

*Senate Amendment "A" strikes the underlying bill and replaces it with the task force to study workers' compensation coverage for regional vo-ag center students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

The task force consists of the chairpersons and ranking members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee plus six additional members, one each appointed by the six legislative leaders. The committee chairs serve as the taskforce's chairpersons.

Any appointed members may be a member of the General Assembly and all initial appointments must be made by 30 days after passage of the bill. Any vacancy is filled by the appointing authority.

FIRST MEETING, STAFFING, AND REPORT DEADLINE

Under the bill, the chairpersons must schedule the first meeting of the task force no later than 60 days after the bill is passed. The administrative staff of the committee serves as administrative staff of the task force.

By January 1, 2025, the task force must submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the committee and the task force will terminate on the date the report is submitted or January 1, 2025, whichever is later.

BACKGROUND

Connecticut Career Certification Program

The career certification program law specifically says all state and federal laws relating to employment and apprenticeships, except unemployment compensation law, apply to the work experiences and that they must be paid employment, with limited exceptions (e.g., community-service type activities) (CGS § 10-20b).

Internship

By law an “internship” is supervised practical training of a high school student or recent high school graduate that is comprised of curriculum and workplace standards approved by the departments of Education and Labor (CGS § 31-23(c)).

Regional Vo-Ag Programs

Regional vo-ag programs are generally hosted at high schools and students are enrolled in the regular comprehensive high school curriculum while also taking agricultural science courses and participating in supervised agricultural experiences.

Work-Study Program

By law a “cooperative work-study program” is a program of

vocational education, approved by the education and labor commissioners, in an arrangement between the school and employers, where students receive instruction including required academic courses and related vocational instruction by alternating between study in school with a job in the occupational field. The two experiences must be planned and supervised by the school and employers so that each contributes to the student's education and employability (CGS § 31-23(c)). A student with a job in this scenario would be covered by workers' compensation.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/21/2024)