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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sSB 287**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING INDOOR AIR QUALITY IN SCHOOLS.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill extends, from January 1, 2025, to June 30, 2030, the deadline for local and regional boards of education (i.e., “school boards”) to complete a uniform inspection and evaluation of their school buildings’ heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems required by law (see BACKGROUND). Beginning July 1, 2025, school boards must conduct the inspection and evaluation in at least 20% of their schools each year until all schools in the district are inspected.

The bill also authorizes the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to award indoor air quality grants to school boards to conduct the inspection and evaluation. It permits these grants even when a school district has not certified compliance with the inspection and evaluation requirements. Under current law, a school district must be compliant to receive any HVAC grant. (Once in compliance, a district may receive the other HVAC grants for repair, upgrading, and installation work.)

Additionally, the bill extends, from July 1, 2024, to January 1, 2030, the deadline for the school indoor air quality working group to submit its final report to the governor and Education, Labor and Public Employees, and Public Health committees. It also requires annual progress reports from the group.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024, except the provision extending the working group is effective upon passage.

#### **§ 2 — HVAC INSPECTION AND EVALUATION**

Current law requires school boards to complete the uniform HVAC system inspection and evaluation in each school building under the board’s jurisdiction before January 1, 2025, and thereafter every five

years. The bill instead requires school boards to complete the evaluations and inspections during a five-year period from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2030. Under the bill, school boards must conduct the inspection and evaluation in at least 20% of their schools each year until all schools are inspected. It also requires that each school building be inspected again every five years.

Like current law, the bill allows DAS to grant a waiver from the inspection requirement, upon the request of a school board, if the department finds (1) there is an insufficient number of certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technicians; industrial hygienists certified by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene or the Board for Global EHS Credentialing; or mechanical engineers to perform the inspections and evaluations or (2) the board has scheduled the inspection for a date after the inspection deadline. Specifically, the bill allows DAS to grant a waiver of up to one year from the five-year deadline and the requirement to inspect at least 20% of a district's schools each year. It also specifies that if a waiver is granted because of the inspection's timing, then the inspection must be scheduled for the subsequent year. (Current law allows a one-year waiver and requires that the inspection be scheduled for after January 1, 2025).

The bill also expands the group of professionals who may conduct the inspections and evaluations to include mechanical contractors licensed in HVAC systems.

### **§ 3 — STATE GRANTS FOR HVAC INSPECTIONS**

Current law prohibits the DAS commissioner from awarding grants for HVAC or indoor air quality improvements to school districts that have not certified compliance with the law's inspection and evaluation requirements. The bill makes an exception by allowing the commissioner to award grants to reimburse the cost of performing the inspections and evaluations. Like current law, the bill prohibits her from awarding other grants under the program if the district has not certified compliance with the inspection and evaluation requirements.

The law allows school boards or regional educational service centers

(RESC) to apply for the grants to reimburse costs for projects to install, replace, or upgrade HVAC systems or related improvements. The school board may receive a reimbursement grant for 20%-80% of its eligible expenses, based on its town ranking among all Connecticut towns using property wealth as a measure. As with the school construction grant program, less wealthy towns receive a higher reimbursement rate. RESCs are reimbursed under a similar method that reflects the wealth of the towns served by the RESC.

## **§ 1 — SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP**

The bill extends the deadline, from July 1, 2024, to January 1, 2030, for the school indoor air quality working group to submit its final report to the governor and the Education, Labor and Public Employees, and Public Health committees. It also requires annual progress reports from the working group, with the first due by July 1, 2025, and each following year until July 1, 2029. The group terminates on July 1, 2030, or on the submission of its final report, whichever is later.

Under existing law, the 23-member group must make recommendations to the legislature on a range of issues related to school indoor air quality, including (1) criteria for rating the priority of HVAC repair and remediation needs; (2) optimal HVAC performance benchmarks to minimize the spread of infectious disease; and (3) protocols school districts can use to investigate and address complaints of mold, hazardous odors or chemicals, and poor indoor air quality.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### ***School HVAC Inspections***

By law, the HVAC system inspection and evaluation must include the following:

1. testing for maximum filter efficiency;
2. measuring outside air rate;
3. verifying ventilation components' operation;
4. measuring air distribution through all inlets and outlets;

5. verifying unit operation and performance of required maintenance in accordance with American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standards;
6. verifying control sequences;
7. verifying carbon dioxide sensors and acceptable carbon dioxide indoor air concentrations; and
8. collecting field data (if none exist) for installing mechanical ventilation.

The inspection and evaluation must identify the extent to which each school's current ventilation system, including any existing central or noncentral mechanical ventilation system, is operating to provide appropriate ventilation to the school building according to ASHRAE's most recent indoor ventilation standards. The inspection and evaluation must result in a written report that includes any corrective actions needed for the mechanical ventilation system or the HVAC infrastructure.

### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 44      Nay 0      (03/18/2024)