

MAJOR ISSUES

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OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

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Notice to Readers

Every year, the Office of Legislative Research (OLR) identifies and provides brief descriptions of important issues the General Assembly may face in the upcoming session. This report does not represent staff suggestions or recommendations. The office identifies issues based on interim studies; research requests; non-confidential discussions with legislators, other legislative participants, and executive branch agencies; as well as our general subject matter knowledge. We also consult with the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) and the Legislative Commissioners' Office (LCO) when selecting issues. The report is organized according to the committee that has primary jurisdiction over an issue. Because more than one committee may consider aspects of the same issue, descriptions may overlap. Where appropriate, we provide links to OLR reports and other documents that contain additional information.

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Aging

Aging in Place

Like many states, Connecticut is confronting a growing elderly population, high nursing home Medicaid costs, and an increasing desire among seniors to remain in their own homes while receiving care (i.e., “aging in place”). In 2024, the legislature may again consider proposals intended to reduce the number of people in institutions and increase the number served by home- and community-based services. Aging in place proposals may include (1) expanding eligibility for state programs (e.g., Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders and Alzheimer’s Respite Program); (2) increasing protections for older adults receiving home- and community-based services against abuse, neglect, and exploitation; or (3) expanding resources and establishing best practices for local senior centers.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2023-R-0157](#), *State Programs for Older Adults*
- Statewide Senior Center Working Group [Final Report](#) (April 4, 2023)

Appropriations

Current Biennium: FY 24 and FY 25

OFA projects General Fund surpluses of \$138.7 million in the current fiscal year (FY 24) and \$67.6 million in FY 25. These estimated surpluses are lower than originally budgeted by \$261 million and \$230.2 million, respectively. The decline is primarily due to higher than budgeted expenditure levels in several areas, including Medicaid, Adjudicated Claims, and caseload pressures across multiple agencies. Key revenue streams (the pass-through entity tax, the Estimated & Finals portion of the income tax, and the sales and use tax) were revised downward in the November consensus revenue estimates. While this is concerning, the impact is partially offset by the application of the volatility cap.

Future Fiscal Years: FY 26 – FY 28

OFA projects positive General Fund balances in FY 26 (\$206.4 million), FY 27 (\$310.5 million), and FY 28 (\$717.7 million) using the required Fiscal Accountability Report methodology. This is due to a positive structural balance between revenue growth and fixed cost growth. Revenue and fixed costs are expected to grow at the same average annualized rate (2.5%) in the out years. Under the required methodology, the out years balance projections do not include any growth in nonfixed costs and must disregard other potential budgetary pressures.

Budget Reserve Fund

The current Budget Reserve Fund (BRF) balance of approximately \$3.3 billion is expected to increase annually through FY 28. It is anticipated that the new, higher statutory BRF cap of 18% (see [PA 23-1](#), § 15) will first be reached in FY 27. State law generally requires that the General Fund operating surplus and any revenue exceeding the volatility cap be deposited into the BRF, dedicated to reducing long-term debt, or both. OFA projects that the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) and Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) will continue to receive BRF transfers, although at a lower level than in recent years. The transfers to the retirement systems result in reductions to required out year expenditures in those accounts (which are also affected by other factors).

Related Report:

- OFA, [Fiscal Accountability Report FY 24 – FY 28](#) (November 20, 2023)

Banking

Earned Wage Access Products

In September 2023, the Department of Banking (DOB) issued administrative guidance stating that, among other things, advances of money on future wages or salary that were earned but not yet paid, commonly referred to as “earned wage access” products, are generally covered by the state’s Small Loan Lending and Related Activities Act ([CGS §§ 36a-555 to -573](#), as amended by [PA 23-126](#)). Consequently, they are subject to its licensing and other requirements. This session, the legislature may review the department’s guidance and consider proposals on the regulation of these financial products.

Related Reading:

- DOB [Industry Guidance](#) (September 11, 2023) and [Supplemental Industry Guidance](#) (September 22, 2023)
- Federal Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, [State Regulatory Developments on “Income-Based Advances”](#) (December 1, 2023)
- Federal Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, [Advisory Opinion on Earned Wage Access Programs](#) (November 30, 2020)

Children

Mental Health Resources

During the two past sessions, the legislature passed several acts addressing mental health services for Connecticut's youth. In 2022, it enacted laws that focused on the provision of additional resources for schools and expanded preschool access and mental and behavioral services for children ([PA 22-80](#) and [PA 22-81](#), respectively). In 2023, it passed a law that, among other things, requires the Department of Social Services commissioner to provide Medicaid reimbursement for certain mental health evaluations and services provided to children at school-based health centers or public schools, to the extent federal law allows ([PA 23-101](#), § 9). This session, the legislature may continue its focus on children's mental health services by considering proposals on related measures, including mandated reporting and child abuse laws.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0146](#), *Acts Affecting Children*, (see "Schools and Education" on pages 18–19)
- [2022-R-0138](#), *Acts Affecting Children*, (see "Child Behavioral and Mental Health" on pages 6–10)

Commerce

State Historic Preservation Office

In 2023, the legislature established a working group to (1) study the State Historic Preservation Office's role in administering the historic preservation review process related to the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act and (2) recommend changes to the act and its related regulations ([SA 23-15](#) and [PA 23-204](#), § 69). The working group must report its findings and recommendations to the Commerce Committee by February 1, 2024. The legislature may consider proposals to enact the working group's recommendations.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0296](#), *Historic Preservation Reviews in Other States*
- [2023-R-0295](#), *Connecticut's State Historic Preservation Review Board*

Education

Early Childhood Education Improvements

A March 2023 executive order established the Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care and tasked it with developing a five-year strategic plan for improving early childhood education in Connecticut ([EO 23-](#)

1). In December 2023, the Office of Early Childhood presented the panel’s final report, which prioritizes, among other things, supporting the early childhood education workforce and developing programs to ensure all children and families have access to high-quality care that meets their specific needs. During the 2024 session, the legislature may consider the report’s recommendations as well as other related proposals.

Related Reading:

- Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care [Final Report](#) (December 8, 2023)

Education Finance and Funding

Last session the Education Committee favorably reported a bill that would have made significant changes to major education grant programs, including speeding up the schedule to fully fund the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant (from FY 28 to FY 25) and revising the magnet school, charter school, regional agricultural science and technology (i.e., “vo-ag”), and Open Choice grant programs ([sHB 5003 \(File No. 575\)](#) (2023)). Ultimately, the full legislature did not adopt all of the bill’s proposals, but the budget implementer act made several changes to these programs, including (1) setting a modified version of the schedule to more quickly fully fund ECS (full funding now slated for FY 26); (2) limiting the tuition that magnet schools and vo-ag programs can charge school districts who send students to them; and (3) appropriating an additional \$150 million divided among these programs in FY 25 ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 340-346).

This session, the legislature may consider making changes to the programs or other measures to help school districts as they face the end of federal pandemic relief funds and continue to address pandemic-related learning loss and chronic absenteeism among students.

Related Reading:

- OLR Public Act Summary for [PA 23-204](#)
- State Department of Education, [Press Release on Chronic Absenteeism and State Assessment Results](#) (August 28, 2023)
- The Brookings Institution, [The ESSER Fiscal Cliff Will Have Serious Implications for Student Equity](#) (September 12, 2023)

Teacher Certification, Recruitment, and Retention

In 2022, the General Assembly directed the State Department of Education (SDE) to conduct a review of the state’s teacher certification statutes and regulations to (1) identify obsolete provisions; (2) evaluate the existing requirements’ effectiveness; and (3) analyze whether any of the laws create a barrier to entry or undue hardship for (a) teacher candidate recruitment or retention,

including state reciprocity (including Puerto Rico) or (b) addressing student academic needs ([PA 22-80](#), § 23). The legislature may consider any SDE findings and recommendations that it may submit.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2019-R-0059](#), *Paths to Teacher Certification*
- Wheelock Educational Policy Center, [Staffing Shortage Areas in Connecticut Public Schools](#)
- SDE, [Enhanced Reciprocity – A New Pathway for Out-of-State Educators to Obtain Connecticut Certification](#) (April 2022)

Energy and Technology

Offshore Wind

In 2019, the legislature authorized the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to solicit proposals for offshore wind projects generating up to 2,000 megawatts ([PA 19-71](#)). Subsequent economic circumstances, including a global pandemic, supply chain disruptions, inflation, and international conflicts, have created serious challenges for these projects. DEEP and its equivalent departments in Massachusetts and Rhode Island responded by signing a memo of understanding to, among other things, coordinate future offshore wind procurements and consider multi-state bid proposals. The legislature may debate other changes in response to these developments.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2020-R-0333](#), *Offshore Wind Procurement*
- DEEP [Request for Proposals for Offshore Wind Facilities](#) (October 27, 2023)
- Offshore Wind Multi-State Coordination [Memo of Understanding](#) (October 3, 2023)

Study on Energy Topics

Last year, the legislature passed [PA 23-102](#), an act that includes numerous changes to Connecticut's energy laws governing electric, gas, and water utility regulation. Section 35 of the act requires DEEP to do a study that (1) evaluates the feasibility of deploying small modular reactors, advanced nuclear reactors, and other zero carbon resources; (2) reviews the power purchase agreement process; and (3) analyzes the state's gas supply system, evaluating whether its current supply and capacity meet the state's energy needs. DEEP's interim report on this study is due January 15, 2024, and the Energy and Technology Committee may consider proposals related to DEEP's findings and recommendations.

Environment

PFAS Regulation

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly known as PFAS, are a group of man-made chemicals that are resistant to heat, water, and oil. They have been used in industrial applications and various consumer products since the 1940s. PFAS are persistent in the environment and the human body; they do not break down and they bioaccumulate (i.e., concentrations increase over time).

Concerned about the health effects of PFAS, the legislature has passed several bills since 2020 to (1) address the sale or use of certain products containing PFAS (i.e., firefighting foam, food packaging, and bottled water) and (2) authorize bonding for things such as PFAS testing and remediation in drinking water. In 2024, the legislature may consider additional legislation to regulate the use of PFAS in consumer products, including textiles.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0258](#), *PFAS Legislation in Connecticut*
- [2023-R-0115](#), *State Laws Regulating PFAS in Clothing and Other Textiles*
- [2022-R-0226](#), *Maine PFAS Law*
- [2019-R-0158](#), *State-level Regulation of PFAS*

Solid Waste Management

With the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority's trash-to-energy facility shuttered, there has been concern about Connecticut's increased use of out-of-state solid waste disposal facilities. Last session, the legislature passed an omnibus solid waste management bill with provisions generally aimed at reducing the amount of materials in the solid waste stream (e.g., setting post-consumer recycled content requirements for plastic beverage containers and expanding the organics recycling law) and considering options for solid waste management infrastructure ([PA 23-170](#)). The legislature may consider additional proposals to remove materials from the solid waste stream and ways to manage waste in-state.

Relatedly, also during the 2023 session, the legislature continued to explore extended producer responsibility (EPR) policy approaches, under which producers (manufacturers) are responsible for the post-consumer disposal of their products. It passed a law requiring the establishment of a tire EPR program ([PA 23-62](#)), and considered EPR proposals for consumer packaging and smoke detectors as well. The latter two did not pass, however, and the legislature could revisit them this session along with considering EPR proposals for other products.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0015](#), *Issue Brief: Extended Producer Responsibility*
- [2022-R-0220](#), *Solid Waste Management Legislation, 2018-2022*

Finance, Revenue and Bonding

State Tax Relief and Restructuring

The legislature enacted a number of tax changes as part of its FY 24-25 budget that included reducing the bottom two marginal income tax rates, extending eligibility for retirement income exemptions to more taxpayers, and increasing the earned income tax credit ([PA 23-204](#)). In the second year of the biennium, the legislature is likely to continue deliberating other tax relief and restructuring proposals that were debated last year but ultimately not adopted. This could include proposals to (1) establish a child tax credit or deduction against the personal income tax, (2) impose an income tax surcharge on capital gains, or (3) require income tax brackets to be indexed for inflation.

In considering these and other tax-related proposals, the legislature will likely take into account the Department of Revenue Services' forthcoming *Tax Incidence Study*. In 2023, the legislature expanded the scope of this report by requiring that it include additional taxes and information on tax burden distribution, effective tax rates, and tax credits and modifications ([PA 23-204](#), § 375).

Related Reading:

- OFA, [Fiscal Accountability Report: FY 24 – FY 28](#) (November 20, 2023)
- Office of Policy and Management, [Fiscal Accountability Report: Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028](#), (November 20, 2023)

Tax Expenditures

Every two years, OFA releases a report evaluating the fiscal impact of the state's various tax exemptions, credits, deductions, and modifications. These tax breaks are referred to as "tax expenditures" because they reduce the amount of tax revenue the state and municipalities ultimately collect. The release of OFA's latest report could generate proposals to (1) reduce or eliminate particular tax expenditures, (2) evaluate their economic impact to the state, or (3) require those benefiting from tax expenditures to disclose more information.

Related OLR Report:

- [2023-R-0215](#), *Guide to Connecticut's Business Tax Credits*

General Law

Artificial Intelligence

Last year, the legislature established a working group to study issues concerning artificial intelligence (AI) including (1) best practices for the ethical and equitable use of AI in state government; (2) recommendations for what should be included in the state’s policies and procedures for developing, procuring, using, and assessing systems that use AI; and (3) whether the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy’s “Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights” and related materials should be used to regulate the private sector, and if Connecticut should adopt a similar blueprint ([PA 23-16](#), § 5). During the 2024 session, the legislature may consider recommendations from the working group, which are due to the General Law Committee by February 1, 2024, as well as other related proposals.

Related Reading:

- White House Office of Science and Technology Policy [Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights Webpage](#)

Government Administration and Elections

Election Administration and Security

State law regulates how general and special elections, primaries, and referenda are administered for state and municipal elections, including post-election auditing, ballot counting and processing, and election official duties and responsibilities. During the 2023 legislative session, the legislature adopted several new election policies, including a state voting rights act and early voting, as well as a resolution proposing a constitutional amendment for no-excuse absentee voting. This year, the legislature may consider implementing or further reforming election administration and security procedures and processes.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0018](#), Early Voting
- [2022-R-0022](#), Absentee Ballot Processing
- [2021-R-0174](#), Post-Election Audits in Connecticut

Higher Education and Employment Advancement

Higher Education in Prison

In 2021, the legislature established a task force to study the costs and benefits of establishing a Postsecondary Prison Education Program Office within the Department of Correction ([PA 21-132](#), § 2). The task force was required to study at least nine topics, including (1) space demands for prison education programming in correctional facilities and (2) other states' and counties' strategies for increasing the number of people who can access these programs using federal Pell grants. In 2022, the legislature made changes to the task force, including requiring it to report its findings to the Higher Education and Judiciary committees by January 1, 2023 ([PA 22-101](#), § 2). In the upcoming session, the legislature may consider recommendations from the task force, as well as other related proposals.

Related Reading:

- [Postsecondary Prison Education Task Force Webpage](#)

Legacy Admissions

[Colorado](#) became the first state to ban legacy admissions at its public colleges and universities in 2021. Other states, including [New York](#) and [Massachusetts](#), are also seeking to address the practice of legacy admissions through legislation. In 2022, the Higher Education Committee proposed a bill prohibiting UConn, the Connecticut State Universities, the regional community-technical colleges, and Charter Oak State College from giving admissions preference to any applicant because he or she has a family member that is a graduate of the institution ([sHB 5034](#) (2022)). This session, the Higher Education Committee may revisit proposals that address college admissions preferences.

Housing

Funding and Programs to Prevent Homelessness

According to annual data released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the number of individuals experiencing homelessness both in Connecticut and across the country has increased in recent years. This session, the legislature may consider proposals to (1) provide additional funding for various housing supports and homelessness services and (2) review existing and proposed policies related to preventing and reducing homelessness.

Related Reading:

- HUD [Annual Homeless Assessment Report Webpage](#)

Housing Affordability and Availability

As housing prices continue to climb across the U.S., and particularly in the northeast, the legislature may consider proposals this session aimed at (1) ensuring housing affordability, particularly for low- and moderate-income households and (2) growing the state’s overall housing stock.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2023-R-0219](#), *Affordable Housing Under CGS § 8-30g*
- Federal Housing Finance Agency, [House Price Index \(HPI\) Quarterly Report](#) (November 28, 2023)

Landlords and Tenants

Last session, the legislature enacted a number of new tenant protections, including requiring landlords to offer tenants pre-occupancy walk-through inspections to identify a unit’s existing defects and limiting the fees and payments that landlords may require from tenants ([PA 23-207](#), §§ 4-8). This session, the legislature may consider additional tenant protections, such as (1) broadening the current requirement that municipalities with a population of at least 25,000 establish fair rent commissions or (2) prohibiting “no-fault” (i.e., lapse-of-time) evictions.

Additionally, the General Assembly may consider legislation aimed at incentivizing landlords to (1) rehabilitate existing multifamily properties, including through energy efficiency upgrades, or (2) participate in tenant-based rental assistance programs, such as the federal Housing Choice Voucher program and the state’s Rental Assistance Program.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2023-R-0247](#), *Protections Against Rent Increases*
- OLR Public Act Summary for [PA 23-207](#)

Human Services

Medicaid Provider Rates

Last session, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring the Department of Social Services (DSS) to conduct a two-part study of Medicaid reimbursement rates ([PA 23-186](#), § 1). The study must compare Connecticut’s Medicaid rates to (1) Medicaid rates in neighboring states and (2) Medicare rates and cost-of-living increases. The first interim report from this study is due February 1, 2024, and may prompt the legislature to debate this topic in the 2024 session.

Related OLR Report:

- [2023-R-0306](#), *Monitoring Medicaid Provider Rates*

New Medicaid Waivers

According to DSS, the department plans to seek a Section 1115 demonstration waiver for incarcerated adults and detained youth, and so the legislature may debate that and other new Medicaid waivers this year. Section 1115 demonstration waivers allow states to test new ideas in their Medicaid programs, monitoring and evaluating policies under the waiver and reporting the results. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has identified these waivers as a way states can address social determinants of health in their Medicaid programs. (“Social determinants of health” generally refers to social, environmental, and economic factors that can influence health status.)

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2023-R-0257](#), *Medicaid State Plan Amendments and Waivers*
- DSS [1115 Demonstration Waiver Webpage](#)
- CMS, [State Health Official Letter 21-001](#), *Opportunities in Medicaid and CHIP to Address Social Determinants of Health* (January 7, 2021)

Insurance and Real Estate

Association Health Plans

Last year, the General Assembly debated authorizing and regulating association health plans, a type of multiple employer welfare arrangement ([sHB 6710](#) (2023)). This year, the legislature may debate association health plans again as well as explore other ways to provide affordable access to health insurance and other health insurance market reforms, which may include a re-evaluation of the healthcare mandate adoption process.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0246](#), *State-Mandated Health Insurance Benefits*
- [2023-R-0140](#), *Issue Brief: Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements and Association Health Plans in Connecticut*
- [2023-R-0076](#), *State Regulation of MEWAs*

Other Reforms

In the past, the Insurance and Real Estate Committee has considered several high-profile topics that it will likely revisit this session, including long-term care insurance reforms and the certificate of need process. This may include considering several recommendations from the Certificate of Need Task Force, such as on strengthening the Office of Health Strategy's oversight authority.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2023-R-0226](#), *Long-Term Care Rate Request Data, 2010-2023*
- OLR Report [2023-R-0194](#), *Long Term Care Insurance Legislation in Other States*
- Certificate of Need Task Force [Final Report](#) (January 17, 2023)

Judiciary

Bail System

In 2023, the legislature's Judiciary and Government Administration and Elections committees favorably reported out a resolution proposing an amendment to the state constitution relating to bail. Specifically, it proposed amending the constitution to allow the court to hold arrested people in pretrial detention without bail when it finds that no pretrial release conditions (1) reasonably assure that the accused will appear in court when required, (2) protect the safety of others or the community, or (3) prevent the accused from obstructing or attempting to obstruct the criminal justice process. The amendment also would have expressly authorized the legislature to pass laws governing the procedures, terms, and conditions for granting or denying pretrial release ([HJ 261](#) (2023)).

In the upcoming session, the legislature may reconsider proposals on this issue along with related recommendations from the Connecticut Sentencing Commission's 2022 bail system study, which includes a framework to further reduce the detained pretrial population and eliminate the use of money bail in Connecticut.

Related Reading:

- Connecticut Sentencing Commission, [2022 Report on Pretrial Justice](#)

Juvenile Justice

In 2023, the legislature created an implementation team to develop a prearrest diversion plan for low-risk children by January 1, 2024 ([PA 23-188](#), § 1). The implementation team includes the departments of Children and Family (DCF), Correction (DOC), and Education (SDE) commissioners and the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) executive director, or their designees, and

representatives of local and regional school boards and a juvenile review board. The legislature also required DCF, DOC, SDE, and CSSD, by November 1, 2023, and in consultation with the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, to develop a reentry success plan for youth released from DOC and the Judicial Department’s facilities and programs ([PA 23-188](#), § 3).

During the 2024 session, the legislature may explore more ways to decrease the juvenile crime rate, including addressing auto thefts, and improve the success rate of juvenile and youthful offenders’ reentry and reintegration into their communities through, for example, changes to educational services and work force development.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0227](#), *Auto Theft-Related Legislation and Funding (2019-2023)*
- [2022-R-0038](#), *Juvenile Diversionary Programs and Court Services*

Labor and Public Employees

Paid Sick Leave

In 2011, Connecticut became the first state to enact a statewide requirement for private sector employers to give their employees paid sick leave ([PA 11-52](#)). The current law generally requires most employers with at least 50 employees to annually give certain employees (“service workers”) up to 40 hours of paid sick leave each year, which accrues at a rate of one hour of paid leave for each 40 hours worked. Last year, the legislature considered bills that would have, among other things, expanded the law to cover nearly all private sector employers and employees, and increased the rate at which employees accrue the leave ([sSB 1178](#) (2023) and [sHB 6668](#) (2023)). The bills were ultimately not enacted, but the legislature may revisit the issue this year.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2023-R-0282](#), *Connecticut’s Paid Sick Leave Law*
- OLR Bill Analysis for [sSB 1178](#) (File No. 449, as amended by Senate “A”) (2023)
- OLR Bill Analysis for [sHB 6668](#) (2023)

Repealing the “Tip Credit” for Servers and Bartenders

Last year, the legislature considered a bill that would have eliminated the “tip credit” in state wage law ([sSB 1177](#) (2023)). This provision allows employers to pay hotel and restaurant staff and bartenders who customarily receive tips less than the minimum wage, provided their tips make up the difference. By law, the tip credit allows employers to pay hotel and restaurant staff \$6.38 per hour and bartenders \$8.23 per hour, as long as their tips add up to the minimum wage (i.e.,

\$15.69 per hour, since January 1, 2024). Some legislators have already indicated their plans to bring this bill back in the upcoming session.

Related Reading:

- OLR Bill Analysis for [sSB 1177](#) (2023)

Planning and Development

Affordable Housing Opportunities

In recent sessions, the legislature has considered bills aimed at increasing and maintaining affordable housing opportunities for Connecticut residents. In 2024, it will likely continue to explore this issue, including proposals (1) encouraging municipalities to permit greater housing density near existing infrastructure and housing production in targeted commercial areas; (2) providing property tax relief to first-time homeowners; and (3) in an effort to prevent foreclosures on owner-occupied homes, restricting when liens for delinquent payments of sewer charges can be enforced.

Related OLR Report:

- [2023-R-0285](#), *State Laws to Increase Housing Stock*

Electronic Literary Materials

Last session, the legislature considered several bills aimed at increasing public libraries' access to electronic literary materials (i.e., eBooks and digital audiobooks) by prohibiting certain limitations in licensing agreements with publishers (e.g., [sHB 6800](#) (2023)). The legislature may again consider legislation with a similar goal.

Motor Vehicle Property Taxes

In 2023, the legislature delayed by one year provisions in a 2022 law that made various changes to motor vehicle taxation and assessment procedures (e.g., changing how they are valued for property tax purposes) ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 209-219). The legislature will likely make further changes to this law before it goes into effect (currently on October 1, 2024). Relatedly, and also in 2023, the legislature established a task force to study the feasibility of repealing the motor vehicle property tax ([SA 23-24](#)). This session, the legislature may consider findings and recommendations from the task force, which are due to the legislature by February 1, 2024.

Related OLR Report:

- [2023-R-0179](#), *Personal Motor Vehicle Property Tax Assessments and Rates*

Public Health

Health Care Worker Safety

There has been increasing attention in recent years on violence against health care workers. According to 2018 data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), healthcare workers accounted for 73% of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses due to workplace violence. Existing state law sets various requirements related to health care workplace violence prevention for certain large health care employers, and a 2023 law ([SA 23-29](#)) required the Department of Public Health to develop a marketing campaign and make monthly public service announcements about health care worker safety.

This session, the legislature will likely consider additional measures to protect the safety of the health care workforce, particularly those focused on safety for workers who visit patients in their homes, such as home health care workers and visiting nurses. Among other things, these proposals may address safety checks, risk assessments, and related training.

Related Reading:

- OLR Report [2023-R-0289](#), *State Law on Health Care Worker Safety*
- BLS [Workplace Violence in Healthcare, 2018 Fact Sheet](#) (April 2020)

Telehealth

Existing law generally sets requirements and restrictions for the delivery of telehealth services and insurance coverage of these services. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the legislature enacted [PA 21-9](#), which temporarily replaced these requirements with similar but more expansive ones until June 30, 2023. [PA 22-81](#) extended the more expansive requirements until June 30, 2024.

Among other things, these temporary requirements (1) expand the types of health providers authorized to provide telehealth services and service delivery methods; (2) allow all out-of-state authorized providers to practice telehealth in Connecticut, instead of only certain mental and behavioral health providers; and (3) generally provide health insurance service and payment parity for telehealth.

During the 2024 session, the legislature may consider proposals to (1) extend the act's sunset date past June 30, 2024, or (2) make some of these temporary requirements permanent.

Read OLR Report:

- [2023-R-0173](#), *Recent Changes to Connecticut's Telehealth Laws*

Public Safety and Security

Police Administration

In June 2023, the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project issued an audit report of State Police traffic stop data from 2014-2021 that, among other things, “identifie[d] a significant number of unsubstantiated infraction records that were submitted to the racial profiling database by both troopers and constables during all years of the audit.” This session, the legislature may consider legislation on police record-keeping practices and technology and other changes to police standards and policies to address the audit’s findings.

Related Material:

- Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project [State Police Traffic Stop Data Audit Report](#) (June 2023)
- Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project [Advisory Board Meeting Recording for June 28, 2023](#)
- Judiciary and Public Safety and Security Committee [Joint Informational Forum Recording for July 26, 2023](#)
- Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project [Joint Informational Forum Presentation Slides](#) (July 26, 2023)
- State Police [Update Memo to the Judiciary and Public Safety and Security Committees](#) (October 12, 2023)

Transportation

Motor Vehicle Emissions Standards and Electric Vehicles

The federal Clean Air Act requires motor vehicles to meet certain federal emissions standards (either those adopted by the federal Environmental Protection Agency or California). Consequently, it prohibits states other than California from adopting their own unique standards but allows them to impose standards identical to California’s. Since 2004 (and beginning with model year 2008), Connecticut law has required that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) adopt California’s light-duty vehicle emissions standards, and legislation passed in 2022 authorizes DEEP to also adopt California’s medium- and heavy-duty vehicle emissions standards ([PA 22-25](#), § 15).

In 2022, California adopted regulations with more stringent emissions standards for light- and medium-duty internal combustion engine vehicles and requirements for vehicle manufacturers to progressively increase the sale of zero-emission vehicles from model years 2026 to 2035. It had

also previously adopted stricter standards on medium- and heavy-duty truck emissions. On July 26, 2023, Governor Lamont announced that DEEP would submit proposed regulations aligning with California. However, DEEP withdrew the proposed regulations before the Legislative Regulation Review Committee met to consider their approval.

In the upcoming session, the legislature may seek to discuss whether Connecticut should continue following the California emissions standards. Additionally, in line with the state's clean transportation goals and push to have more electric vehicles (EV) on the roads, it may discuss other EV-related policy matters such as (1) expanding or improving EV purchase incentives, (2) increasing availability of charging infrastructure, and (3) accounting for future declines in gas tax revenue due to EV growth.

Related Reading:

- DEEP [Light-Duty Vehicle Regulations Hearing Officer Report](#) (September 25, 2023)
- DEEP [Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicle Regulations Hearing Officer Report](#) (September 21, 2023)
- OLR Report [2022-R-0182](#), *Issue Brief: The Connecticut Hydrogen and Electric Automobile Purchase Rebate Program*

Traffic Safety

In the past few years, the legislature has increased its focus on traffic safety to address Connecticut's concerning post-pandemic trends in driver and pedestrian fatalities, drug use, and impaired driving incidents, among others. Last session, the legislature enacted a law allowing municipalities to operate speed and red light cameras ([PA 23-116](#)) and considered a bill to lower the blood alcohol content (BAC) limit for driving under the influence (DUI) to 0.05% ([sSB 1082](#) (2023)). This session, the legislature will likely continue addressing traffic safety and may consider proposals such as (1) making adjustments to the camera law as towns begin applying for Department of Transportation (DOT) approval of their camera plans, (2) considering a reduction to a 0.05% BAC limit, (3) authorizing oral fluid testing for DUI enforcement, or (4) improving impaired driving data collection.

Related Reading:

- OLR Public Act Summary for [PA 23-116](#)
- OLR Report [2022-R-0249](#), *Drug-Impaired Driving Laws*
- DOT [Guidance for Municipalities Developing an Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Device \(ATESD\) Plan](#) (January 2, 2024)

Veterans' and Military Affairs

Property Tax Relief

State law currently provides veterans and servicemembers several property tax exemptions based on, among other things, the veteran's service or disability rating. Municipalities also have the option of providing additional exemptions. This session, the legislature may consider amending these exemptions and establishing new ones to provide property tax relief to veterans and servicemembers.

Related OLR Reports:

- [2023-R-0293](#), *State Requirements for Veterans Claiming Municipal Veteran Property Tax Exemptions*
- [2023-R-0175](#), *Veterans' Property Tax Exemptions*
- [2022-R-0186](#), *Backgrounder: State Veterans' Benefits*
- [2022-R-0155](#), *Benefits for Veterans Without Wartime Service*