

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1492

AN ACT CONCERNING LAW ENFORCEMENT RECRUITMENT AND

Title: RETENTION.

Vote Date: 3/18/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/11/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

[Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.](#)

[Sen. Paul Cicarella, 34th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Patrick S. Boyd, 50th Dist.](#)

REASONS FOR BILL:

SB1492 creates incentives that police departments throughout the state can use for recruitment and retention. In 2019, the International Association of Chiefs of Police did a state-wide survey to investigate the recruitment and retention matter. They found that 78% of agencies reported having difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates, 65% of agencies reported that recruiting is more difficult today than it was five years ago. 50% of agencies reported having to change agency policies in order to increase the chances of gaining qualified applicants, 25% of agencies reported having to reduce or eliminate certain agency services, units, or positions because of staffing difficulties.

Connecticut is not alone in its efforts to address the decreasing number of people looking to work as a police officer. Or the number of police officers who are either walking off the job or transferring to a different unit for better benefits. Police officers throughout the state say that they can no longer sustain their lifestyles due to so many economic changes. The changing economy has caused things like housing, and food to skyrocket. Making it difficult for them to provide for themselves or their families. In addition to the cost-of-living increases many of them are over worked from doing longer shifts due to departments short staffing. Need assistance dealing with trauma from their daily work interactions. If passed this bill will give towns a plan of action to address this ongoing crisis.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Ronnell Higgins Commissioner-Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection

Commissioner Higgins appreciates the committee's commitment to addressing this topic because it has been an ongoing issue for the past few years in addition to the rising number of retirements. The commissioner identified specific sections within this bill that he believes needs to be revised.

Section 1

The commissioner stated that DESPP is already focused on this initiative which is called DESPP in the Community.

Section 2

The commissioner supports the concepts within this section because it will be beneficial to individuals throughout the state but points out that the agency has not been presented with additional funding from the Governor's budget to execute these proposals.

Section 3

Commissioner Higgins states that this section which calls for reimbursement to municipalities that cover the cost of basic police officer training. It cannot be implemented due to the lack of resources for this within the Governor's budget.

Section 4

Commissioner Higgins is requesting that the pilot program portion of this section be removed from the bill. He states that the timeline for the study followed by the pilot program is not realistic. It will take time to identify individuals currently enrolled at the university who are interested in joining the academy.

Section 6 and 7

States that the agency has concerns about this section due to the fact of the Governor's budget not allocating funds to execute this grant program. In addition to that he is worried that it can interfere with future collective bargaining agreements.

Section 18

Expresses that the agency is already doing that but it is looking for ways to better utilize those individuals while remaining compliant with POST Standards.

Section 19

The agency has concerns with this section because it may conflict with the recently passed portions of HB 7066.

Section 20

The commissioner supports the intent behind this section but once again does not know how it can be accomplished when it was not included within the Governor's budget.

Nandini Natarajan, Chief Executive Officer-Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority

Mrs. Natarajan request that the committee remove section 14 of this bill. She appreciates the goal of the bill but finds section 14 unnecessary and may even have some unintended consequences. Expresses that CHFA supports incentivizing and rewarding those who serve as police officers and firefighters but is concerned about whether the offering of additional programs will only lead to more confusion since CHFA already has so many programs. In addition to that she also states that the limitation placed on firefighters through the program puts fighters at a disadvantage because they will have to uproot their families to gain access to the program benefits and many do not want to do it.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Senator Martin Looney](#)

Mr. Looney appreciates the different concepts presented in the bill to increase recruitment and retention of officers within the state.

Section 8

The senator request that the committee put some attention to using educational advancement as a recruiting tool. He states that a person who is close to earning a degree but is short a few credits could be granted those credits upon completing police officer training. He also mentions that Charter Oak State College grants significant academic credit for police officers training which he thinks should be the standard within state institutions.

Section 4

Supports this section because if the Police Standards and Training Council can examine criminal justice course offered at colleges and universities it would shorten the time needed to finish training and allow potential officers to join a police force sooner.

[Betsy Gara Executive Director Connecticut Council of Small Towns \(COST\)](#)

Mrs. Gara supports this bill because municipalities are struggling to hire and retain police officers. She acknowledges that the state has to do a better job to make police officers feel recognize and appreciated for all the work that they do in their communities. Moreover she identifies and offers full support for Section 3, Section 8, Section 9,10,11, Section 14. She then explains that COST opposes provisions in the bill creating a property tax exemption for police officers residing in a distressed municipality.

[David O'Meara President of the Stamford Police Association](#)

Mr. O'Meara supports this because it is an issue that many departments throughout the state are experiencing. He has notice that Stamford has experienced a 70% decrease in applicants since 2014. He expresses that this legislation has introduce a variety of target incentives designed to attract exceptional individuals who want to serve their community. This bill will create a much more appealing career path for the future.

[Christopher Albani Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union](#)

Mr. Albani supports this legislation because police officers are among the lowest paid in the state which prevents many officers from achieving their dreams. Albani states that due to

financial limitations many officers never get to pursue their educational aspirations or create stable households for their families.

Michael Fumiatti

Mr. Fumiatti offered in-person testimony in support of the bill. States that many of the incentives offered in the bill will be instrumental in the recruitment and retention of quality law enforcement police officers especially in the city of New Haven. Expresses that he heard the conversation in the room around New Haven. He states that the town was without a contract for two years and now the officers are being compensated at a competitive rate compared to other agencies in the state. He states that section 20 is needed because his department has taken a few steps to help officers deal with the trauma that comes with the job. In addition to that the department is equipping the officers with the necessary tools needed to deal with their ever-changing work duties.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Florencio Cotto President POACT](#)

Mrs. Cotto objects to Section 17 of the bill because it damages collective bargaining rights. Cotto explains that if this moves forward this section will cause the weakening of collective bargaining rights. This will impact the recruitment and retention efforts of many departments throughout the state. This section will also affect morale and trust amongst officers.

[Jess Zaccagnino Policy Counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut](#)

Mr. Zaccagnino opposes this bill. Expresses that the ACLU is committed to ending police violence and racism in policing in all forms.

[Mike Muszynski Connecticut Conference of Municipalities](#)

Mr. Muszynski urges the committee to amend or remove section 13 of the bill. CCM is concerned with section 13 because it creates a property tax exemption for police officers in the amount of \$10,000 that reside in a distressed municipality CCM concern is that this financial burden will fall on the communities that are already distressed. He explains that the loss in revenue from each officers property tax abatement would be transferred to residential and commercial tax payers making their property taxes increase

Reported by: Rena Lewis

Date: 3/31/25