



House Bill No. 6438

Public Act No. 25-95

***AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED PROPOSALS TO RECOGNIZE
AND HONOR THE MILITARY SERVICE OF MEMBERS OF THE
ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS IN CONNECTICUT.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The sum of one hundred sixty-nine thousand dollars is appropriated to the Military Department from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, for the purpose of supporting the department's joint enlistment enhancement program.

Sec. 2. Subsection (a) of section 17b-28i of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

(a) To the extent permissible by federal law, the Commissioner of Social Services shall disregard [federal] (1) United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered Aid and Attendance pension benefits that are granted to a veteran or the surviving spouse of such veteran when determining income eligibility for the state's Medicare savings, medical assistance and energy assistance programs administered under section 17b-2, and (2) all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran or the surviving spouse of

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such veteran when determining income eligibility for the state's Medicare savings, HUSKY A, HUSKY D and energy assistance programs administered under section 17b-2. As used in this subsection, "veteran" has the same meaning as provided in section 27-103, and "HUSKY A" and "HUSKY D" have the same meanings as provided in section 17b-290.

Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 17b-104 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

(a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall administer the program of state supplementation to the Supplemental Security Income Program provided for by the Social Security Act and state law. The commissioner may delegate any powers and authority to any deputy, assistant, investigator or supervisor, who shall have, within the scope of the power and authority so delegated, all of the power and authority of the Commissioner of Social Services. The standard of need for the temporary family assistance program shall be fifty-five per cent of the federal poverty level. The commissioner shall make a reinvestigation, at least every twelve months, of all cases receiving aid from the state, except that such reinvestigation may be conducted every twenty-four months for recipients of assistance to the elderly or disabled with stable circumstances, and shall maintain all case records of the several programs administered by the Department of Social Services so that such records show, at all times, full information with respect to eligibility of the applicant or recipient. In the determination of need under any public assistance program, such income or earnings shall be disregarded as federal law requires, and such income or earnings may be disregarded as federal law permits. In determining eligibility, the commissioner shall disregard from income (1) all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits, Aid and Attendance pension benefits and

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Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran, as defined [under] in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran, and (2) any tax refund or advance payment with respect to a refundable credit to the same extent such refund or advance payment would be disregarded under 26 USC 6409 in any federal program or state or local program financed in whole or in part with federal funds. The commissioner shall encourage and promulgate such incentive earning programs as are permitted by federal law and regulations.

Sec. 4. Subsection (c) of section 17b-191 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

(c) To be eligible for cash assistance under the program, a person shall (1) be (A) eighteen years of age or older; (B) a minor found by a court to be emancipated pursuant to section 46b-150; or (C) under eighteen years of age and the commissioner determines good cause for such person's eligibility, and (2) not have assets exceeding five hundred dollars or, if such person is married, such person and his or her spouse shall not have assets exceeding one thousand dollars. In determining eligibility, the commissioner shall [not consider as] disregard from income (A) all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits, Aid and Attendance pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran, as defined in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran; and (B) any tax refund or advance payment with respect to a refundable credit to the same extent such refund or advance payment would be disregarded under 26 USC 6409 in any federal program or state or local program financed in whole or in part with federal funds. No person who is a substance abuser and refuses or fails to enter available, appropriate treatment shall be eligible for cash assistance under the program until such person enters treatment. No person whose benefits from the temporary family assistance program have terminated as a result of

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time-limited benefits or for failure to comply with a program requirement shall be eligible for cash assistance under the program.

Sec. 5. Section 17b-256f of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

(a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall increase income disregards used to determine eligibility by the Department of Social Services for the federal Qualified Medicare Beneficiary, the Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary and the Qualifying Individual programs, administered in accordance with the provisions of 42 USC 1396d(p), by such amounts that shall result in persons with income that is (1) less than two hundred eleven per cent of the federal poverty level qualifying for the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary program, (2) at or above two hundred eleven per cent of the federal poverty level but less than two hundred thirty-one per cent of the federal poverty level qualifying for the Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary program, and (3) at or above two hundred thirty-one per cent of the federal poverty level but less than two hundred forty-six per cent of the federal poverty level qualifying for the Qualifying Individual program.

(b) The commissioner shall not apply an asset test for eligibility under the Medicare Savings Program. The commissioner shall [not consider as income] disregard from income all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits, Aid and Attendance pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran, as defined in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran. The Commissioner of Social Services, pursuant to section 17b-10, may implement policies and procedures to administer the provisions of this section while in the process of adopting such policies and procedures in regulation form, provided the commissioner prints notice of the intent to adopt the regulations on the department's Internet web site and the eRegulations System not later

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than twenty days after the date of implementation. Such policies and procedures shall be valid until the time final regulations are adopted.

Sec. 6. Subsection (a) of section 17b-261 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

(a) Medical assistance shall be provided for any otherwise eligible person (1) whose income, including any available support from legally liable relatives and the income of the person's spouse or dependent child, is not more than one hundred fifty-nine per cent, pending approval of a federal waiver applied for pursuant to subsection (e) of this section, of the benefit amount paid to a person with no income under the temporary family assistance program, and (2) if such person is an institutionalized individual as defined in Section 1917 of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396p(h)(3), and has not made an assignment or transfer or other disposition of property for less than fair market value for the purpose of establishing eligibility for benefits or assistance under this section. Any such disposition shall be treated in accordance with Section 1917(c) of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396p(c). Any disposition of property made on behalf of an applicant or recipient or the spouse of an applicant or recipient by a guardian, conservator, person authorized to make such disposition pursuant to a power of attorney or other person so authorized by law shall be attributed to such applicant, recipient or spouse. A disposition of property ordered by a court shall be evaluated in accordance with the standards applied to any other such disposition for the purpose of determining eligibility. The commissioner shall establish the standards for eligibility for medical assistance at one hundred fifty-nine per cent of the benefit amount paid to a household of equal size with no income under the temporary family assistance program. In determining eligibility, the commissioner shall not consider as income United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered Aid and Attendance pension benefits that are granted to a

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veteran, as defined in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran. Except as provided in section 17b-277 and section 17b-292, the medical assistance program shall provide coverage to persons under the age of nineteen with household income up to one hundred ninety-six per cent of the federal poverty level without an asset limit and to persons under the age of nineteen, who qualify for coverage under Section 1931 of the Social Security Act, with household income not exceeding one hundred ninety-six per cent of the federal poverty level without an asset limit, and their parents and needy caretaker relatives, who qualify for coverage under Section 1931 of the Social Security Act, with household income not exceeding one hundred thirty-three per cent of the federal poverty level without an asset limit. Such levels shall be based on the regional differences in such benefit amount, if applicable, unless such levels based on regional differences are not in conformance with federal law. Any income in excess of the applicable amounts shall be applied as may be required by said federal law, and assistance shall be granted for the balance of the cost of authorized medical assistance. The Commissioner of Social Services shall provide applicants for assistance under this section, at the time of application, with a written statement advising them of (A) the effect of an assignment or transfer or other disposition of property on eligibility for benefits or assistance, (B) the effect that having income that exceeds the limits prescribed in this subsection will have with respect to program eligibility, and (C) the availability of, and eligibility for, services provided by the Connecticut Home Visiting System, established pursuant to section 17b-751b. For coverage dates on or after January 1, 2014, the department shall use the modified adjusted gross income financial eligibility rules set forth in Section 1902(e)(14) of the Social Security Act and the implementing regulations to determine eligibility for HUSKY A, HUSKY B and HUSKY D applicants, as defined in section 17b-290. To the extent permissible under federal law, the Commissioner of Social Services shall disregard all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits, Aid and

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Attendance pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran or the surviving spouse of such veteran when determining income eligibility for HUSKY A and HUSKY D applicants. Persons who are determined ineligible for assistance pursuant to this section shall be provided a written statement notifying such persons of their ineligibility and advising such persons of their potential eligibility for one of the other insurance affordability programs as defined in 42 CFR 435.4.

Sec. 7. Subsection (l) of section 17b-342 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

(l) In determining eligibility for the program described in this section, the commissioner shall [not consider as] disregard from income (1) all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits, Aid and Attendance pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran, as defined in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran, and (2) any tax refund or advance payment with respect to a refundable credit to the same extent such refund or advance payment would be disregarded under 26 USC 6409 in any federal program or state or local program financed in whole or in part with federal funds.

Sec. 8. Subsection (a) of section 17b-801 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

(a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall administer a state-appropriated fuel assistance program to provide, within available appropriations, fuel assistance to elderly and disabled persons whose household gross income is above the income eligibility guidelines for the Connecticut energy assistance program but does not exceed two hundred per cent of federal poverty guidelines. The income eligibility

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guidelines for the state-appropriated fuel assistance program shall be determined, annually, by the Commissioner of Social Services, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management. In determining eligibility, the commissioner shall [not consider as income] disregard from income all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits, Aid and Attendance pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran, as defined under section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran. The commissioner may adopt regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, to implement the provisions of this subsection.

Sec. 9. Section 10a-26 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) For the purposes of this section, sections 10a-77, as amended by this act, 10a-99, as amended by this act, and 10a-105, as amended by this act, and this part: (1) A "full-time student" means a student who has been registered and who has been accepted for matriculation at a constituent unit of the state system of higher education in a course of study leading to an associate, bachelor or advanced degree or whose course of instruction or credit hour load indicates pursuit toward a degree; (2) "tuition" means a direct charge for institutional programs, which is clearly delineated from any other fees.

(b) In order to defray part of the cost of the higher education institutional programs at the constituent units of the state system of higher education, tuition shall be charged as provided in [said] sections 10a-77, as amended by this act, 10a-99, as amended by this act, and 10a-105, as amended by this act, for each full-time student or shall be prorated in the case of a student carrying less than seventy-five per cent of the credit hours defined as a full-time load by the institution. Any person enrolled in and paying extension fees for a course in an educational extension program, [or] including for a course in a summer

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or winter school session or intersession, shall not be charged tuition for such course.

(c) Fees charged for educational extension programs, [and for] including for summer or winter school sessions or intersessions, under sections 10a-77, as amended by this act, 10a-99, as amended by this act, and 10a-105, as amended by this act, shall not be deemed to be tuition within the meaning of this section.

Sec. 10. Subsections (d) to (g), inclusive, of section 10a-77 of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(d) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition at any of the regional community-technical colleges (1) for any dependent child of a person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission to such institution and is a resident of the state at the time such child is accepted for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to such institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is accepted for admission to such institution. Said board shall also waive for any such veteran the payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (3) for any resident of the state sixty-two years of age or older, provided, at the end of the regular registration period, there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to enroll and there is space available in such

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course after accommodating all such students, (4) for any student attending the Connecticut State Police Academy who is enrolled in a law enforcement program at said academy offered in coordination with a regional community-technical college which accredits courses taken in such program, (5) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to such institution on a full-time or part-time basis in an undergraduate degree-granting program. Said board shall also waive for any such member the payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (6) for any dependent child of a (A) police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of this state, (8) for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, and (9) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was a resident of this state. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National Guard described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall be given the same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for courses at regional community-technical colleges. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for

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less than one year.

(e) (1) If any veteran described in subsection (d) of this section has applied for federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, the board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees at any of the regional community-technical colleges for such veteran in accordance with subdivision (2) of this subsection. If any such veteran certifies to said board that such veteran's application for such federal educational assistance has been denied or withdrawn, said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees in accordance with subsection (d) of this section.

(2) (A) For purposes of this subdivision, "veteran tuition benefit" means the portion of federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 to be paid to a regional community-technical college on behalf of a veteran that represents payment for tuition and extension fees. Such portion shall be calculated by multiplying (i) the total amount of such federal educational assistance to be paid to a regional community-technical college on behalf of such veteran by (ii) an amount obtained by dividing (I) the sum of the actual tuition and extension fees charged by such college to such veteran by (II) the sum of the actual tuition, extension fees and other fees charged by such college to such veteran.

(B) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees in excess of the veteran tuition benefit at any of the regional community-technical colleges for such veteran.

(f) Said board shall set aside from its anticipated regional community-technical college tuition revenue, an amount not less than that required by said board's tuition policy. Such funds shall be used to provide tuition waivers, tuition remissions, grants for educational expenses and student employment for residents enrolled in regional community-

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technical colleges as full or part-time matriculated students in a degree-granting program, or enrolled in a precollege remedial program, who demonstrate substantial financial need. Said board may also set aside from its anticipated tuition revenue an additional amount equal to one per cent of [said] such tuition revenue for financial assistance for students who would not otherwise be eligible for financial assistance but who do have a financial need as determined by the college in accordance with this subsection. In determining such financial need, the college shall exclude the value of equity in the principal residence of the student's parents or legal guardians, or in the student's principal residence if the student is not considered to be a dependent of his parents or legal guardians and shall assess the earnings of a dependent student at the rate of thirty per cent.

(g) The Regional Community-Technical Colleges Operating Fund shall be reimbursed for the amount by which the tuition and extension fee waivers granted under subsection (d) of this section exceed five per cent of tuition and extension fee revenue through an annual state appropriation. The board of trustees shall request such an appropriation and [said] such appropriation shall be based upon an estimate of tuition and extension fee revenue loss using tuition and extension fee rates in effect for the fiscal year in which such appropriation will apply.

Sec. 11. Subsections (d) to (g), inclusive, of section 10a-99 of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(d) Said board shall waive the payment of tuition fees for undergraduate and graduate degree programs at the Connecticut State University System (1) for any dependent child of a person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission to such institution and is a resident of the state at the time such child is accepted

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for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to such institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is accepted for admission to such institution. Said board shall also waive for any such veteran the payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (3) for any resident of the state sixty-two years of age or older who has been accepted for admission to such institution, provided (A) such resident is enrolled in a degree-granting program, or (B) at the end of the regular registration period, there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to enroll and there is space available in such course after accommodating all such students, (4) for any student attending the Connecticut Police Academy who is enrolled in a law enforcement program at said academy offered in coordination with the university which accredits courses taken in such program, (5) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to such institution on a full-time or part-time basis in an undergraduate or graduate degree-granting program. Said board shall also waive for any such member the payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (6) for any dependent child of a (A) police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7) for any resident of this state

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who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of the state, (8) for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, and (9) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was a resident of this state. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National Guard described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall be given the same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for courses at Connecticut state universities. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less than one year.

(e) (1) If any veteran described in subsection (d) of this section has applied for federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, the board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees at the Connecticut State University System for such veteran in accordance with subdivision (2) of this subsection. If any such veteran certifies to said board that such veteran's application for such federal educational assistance has been denied or withdrawn, said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees in accordance with subsection (d) of this section.

(2) (A) For purposes of this subdivision, "veteran tuition benefit" means the portion of federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 to be paid to the Connecticut State University System on behalf of a veteran that

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represents payment for tuition and extension fees. Such portion shall be calculated by multiplying (i) the total amount of such federal educational assistance to be paid to the Connecticut State University System on behalf of such veteran by (ii) an amount obtained by dividing (I) the sum of the actual tuition and extension fees charged by the Connecticut State University System to such veteran by (II) the sum of the actual tuition, extension fees and other fees charged by the Connecticut State University System to such veteran.

(B) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees in excess of the veteran tuition benefit at the Connecticut State University System for such veteran.

(f) Said board shall set aside from its anticipated tuition revenue, an amount not less than that required by the board of governors' tuition policy established under subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of section 10a-6. Such funds shall be used to provide tuition waivers, tuition remissions, grants for educational expenses and student employment for any undergraduate or graduate student who is enrolled as a full or part-time matriculated student in a degree-granting program, or enrolled in a precollege remedial program, and who demonstrates substantial financial need. Said board may also set aside from its anticipated tuition revenue an additional amount equal to one per cent of [said] such tuition revenue for financial assistance for students who would not otherwise be eligible for financial assistance but who do have a financial need as determined by the university in accordance with this subsection. In determining such financial need, the university shall exclude the value of equity in the principal residence of the student's parents or legal guardians, or in the student's principal residence if the student is not considered to be a dependent of his parents or legal guardians and shall assess the earnings of a dependent student at the rate of thirty per cent.

(g) The Connecticut State University System Operating Fund shall be

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reimbursed for the amount by which the tuition and extension fee waivers granted under subsection (d) of this section exceed two and one-half per cent of tuition and extension fee revenue through an annual state appropriation. The board of trustees shall request such an appropriation and [said] such appropriation shall be based upon an estimate of tuition and extension fee revenue loss using tuition and extension fee rates in effect for the fiscal year in which such appropriation will apply.

Sec. 12. Subsections (e) to (h), inclusive, of section 10a-105 of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(e) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition fees for any undergraduate or graduate degree program at The University of Connecticut (1) for any dependent child of a person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission to The University of Connecticut and is a resident of the state at the time such child is accepted for admission to said institution, (2) subject to the provisions of subsection (f) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to said institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is accepted for admission to said institution. Said board shall also waive for any such veteran the payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (3) for any resident of the state sixty-two years of age or older who has been accepted for admission to said institution, provided (A) such resident is enrolled in a degree-granting program, or (B) at the end of the regular registration period,

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there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to enroll and there is space available in such course after accommodating all such students, (4) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to said institution on a full-time or part-time basis in an undergraduate or graduate degree-granting program. Said board shall also waive for any such member the payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (5) for any dependent child of a (A) police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (6) for any resident of the state who is the dependent child or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of the state, (7) for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, and (8) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was a resident of this state. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National Guard described in subdivision (4) of this subsection shall be given the same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for courses at The University of Connecticut. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less

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than one year.

(f) (1) If any veteran described in subsection (e) of this section has applied for federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, the board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees at The University of Connecticut for such veteran in accordance with subdivision (2) of this subsection. If any such veteran certifies to said board that such veteran's application for such federal educational assistance has been denied or withdrawn, said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees in accordance with subsection (d) of this section.

(2) (A) For purposes of this subdivision, "veteran tuition benefit" means the portion of federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 to be paid to The University of Connecticut on behalf of a veteran that represents payment for tuition and extension fees. Such portion shall be calculated by multiplying (i) the total amount of such federal educational assistance to be paid to The University of Connecticut on behalf of such veteran by (ii) an amount obtained by dividing (I) the sum of the actual tuition and extension fees charged by The University of Connecticut to such veteran by (II) the sum of the actual tuition, extension fees and other fees charged by The University of Connecticut to such veteran.

(B) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition and extension fees in excess of the veteran tuition benefit at The University of Connecticut for such veteran.

(g) Said board of trustees shall set aside from its anticipated tuition revenue, an amount not less than that required by the board of governors' tuition policy established under subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of section 10a-6. Such funds shall be used to provide tuition waivers, tuition remissions, grants for educational expenses and student employment for any undergraduate, graduate or professional student

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who is enrolled as a full or part-time matriculated student in a degree-granting program, or enrolled in a precollege remedial program, and who demonstrates substantial financial need. Said board may also set aside from its anticipated tuition revenue an additional amount equal to one per cent of [said] such tuition revenue for financial assistance for students who would not otherwise be eligible for financial assistance but who do have a financial need as determined by the university in accordance with this subsection. In determining such financial need, the university shall exclude the value of equity in the principal residence of the student's parents or legal guardians, or in the student's principal residence if the student is not considered to be a dependent of his parents or legal guardians and shall assess the earnings of a dependent student at the rate of thirty per cent.

(h) The University of Connecticut Operating Fund shall be reimbursed for the amount by which tuition and extension fee waivers granted under subsection (e) of this section exceed two and one-half per cent of tuition and extension fee revenue through an annual state appropriation. The board of trustees shall request such an appropriation and [said] such appropriation shall be based upon an estimate of tuition and extension fee revenue loss using tuition and extension fee rates in effect for the fiscal year in which such appropriation will apply.

Sec. 13. Section 10a-143 of the general statutes is amended by adding subsections (h) and (i) as follows (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(NEW) (h) The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall waive the payment of tuition fees at Charter Oak State College (1) subject to the provisions of subsection (i) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to Charter Oak State College and is domiciled in this state at the time such

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veteran is accepted for admission to said institution, and (2) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to Charter Oak State College on a full-time or part-time basis in a degree-granting program. If any such veteran or member of the National Guard who receives a tuition fee waiver in accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National Guard described in this subsection shall be given the same status as students not receiving tuition fee waivers in registering for courses at Charter Oak State College. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less than one year.

(NEW) (i) (1) If any veteran described in subsection (h) of this section has applied for federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall waive the payment of tuition fees at Charter Oak State College for such veteran in accordance with subdivision (2) of this subsection. If any such veteran certifies to said board of regents that such veteran's application for such federal educational assistance has been denied or withdrawn, said board of regents shall waive the payment of tuition fees in accordance with subsection (h) of this section.

(2) (A) For purposes of this subdivision, "veteran tuition benefit" means the portion of federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 to be paid to Charter Oak State College on behalf of a veteran that represents payment for tuition fees. Such portion shall be calculated by multiplying (i) the total amount of such federal educational assistance to be paid to Charter Oak State College on behalf of such veteran by (ii) an amount obtained by dividing

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(I) the actual tuition fees charged by Charter Oak State College to such veteran by (II) the sum of the actual tuition fees and other fees charged by Charter Oak State College to such veteran.

(B) The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall waive the payment of tuition fees in excess of the veteran tuition benefit at Charter Oak State College for such veteran.

Sec. 14. Section 51-297 of the general statutes, as amended by section 201 of public act 23-204, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) A public defender, assistant public defender or deputy assistant public defender shall make such investigation of the financial status of each person he has been appointed to represent or who has requested representation based on indigency, as he deems necessary. He shall cause the person to complete a written statement under oath or affirmation setting forth his liabilities and assets, income and sources thereof, and such other information which the commission shall designate and require on forms furnished for such purpose.

(b) Any person who intentionally falsifies a written statement in order to obtain appointment of a public defender, assistant public defender or deputy assistant public defender shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

(c) If a public defender, assistant public defender or deputy assistant public defender is appointed to provide assistance to any person and he subsequently determines that the person is ineligible for assistance, the public defender, assistant public defender or deputy assistant public defender shall promptly inform the person in writing and make a motion to withdraw his appearance if filed, or his appointment if made by the court, as soon as it is practical to do so without prejudice to the case, giving the defendant a reasonable time to secure private counsel.

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If the withdrawal is granted by the court, the person shall reimburse the commission for any assistance which has been provided for which the person is ineligible.

(d) Reimbursement to the commission shall be made in accordance with a schedule of reasonable charges for public defender services which shall be provided by the commission.

(e) The Chief Public Defender or anyone serving under him may institute an investigation into the financial status of each defendant at such times as the circumstances shall warrant. In connection therewith, he shall have the authority to require a defendant or the parents, guardians or other persons responsible for the support of a minor defendant, child or youth, or those persons holding property in trust or otherwise for a defendant, child or youth, to execute and deliver such written authorizations as may be necessary to provide the Chief Public Defender, or anyone serving under him, with access to records of public or private sources, otherwise confidential, or any other information, which may be relevant to the making of a decision as to eligibility under this chapter. The Chief Public Defender, the Deputy Chief Public Defender, and each public defender, assistant public defender and deputy assistant public defender or designee, are authorized to obtain information from any office of the state or any subdivision or agency thereof on request and without payment of any fees.

(f) (1) As used in this chapter, "indigent defendant" means (A) a person who is formally charged with the commission of a crime punishable by imprisonment and who does not have the financial ability at the time of his request for representation to secure competent legal representation and to provide other necessary expenses of legal representation; (B) a child who has a right to counsel under the provisions of subsection (a) of section 46b-135 and who does not have the financial ability at the time of his request for representation to secure competent legal representation and to provide other necessary expenses

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of legal representation; or (C) any person who has a right to counsel under section 46b-136 and who does not have the financial ability at the time of his request for representation to secure competent legal representation and to provide other necessary expenses of legal representation.

(2) An assessment determining whether a person has the financial ability to secure competent legal representation and to provide other necessary expenses of legal representation or qualifies as an indigent defendant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be based upon guidelines established by the commission. The commission shall annually establish such guidelines providing that a person whose income, which shall exclude all service-connected disability benefits administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and otherwise be calculated as described in such guidelines, is two hundred fifty per cent or less of the federal poverty level may qualify as an indigent defendant. The commission shall make such guidelines available to the public on the Division of Public Defender Service's Internet web site.

(g) If the Chief Public Defender or anyone serving under the Chief Public Defender determines that an individual is not eligible to receive the services of a public defender under this chapter, the individual may appeal the decision to the court before which the individual's case is pending.

Sec. 15. Subsection (b) of section 27-102l of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(b) (1) The commissioner may appoint a manager to administer an Office of Advocacy and Assistance for the aid and benefit of veterans and their spouses, eligible dependents and family members. The office shall have a staff of not less than [ten] nineteen men and women,

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including [eight] not less than fourteen veterans' service officers, and not less than three clerical personnel. The manager and veterans' service officers shall be veterans, as defined in subsection (a) of section 27-103, or veterans who were awarded the armed forces expeditionary medal for service by the armed forces.

(2) (A) The manager shall develop a training module on assisting and serving women veterans with regard to state or federal services or benefits and identifying and advising such veterans of community or nonprofit programs focused on assisting and serving such veterans. The manager shall hold and provide instruction for an annual training session, in accordance with such module, to each veterans' service officer and any member of a municipal veterans advisory committee, director of municipal veterans services or municipal veterans representative, as described in subsection (c) of section 27-135, or representative from an Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members center at a public institution of higher education in this state.

(B) At least one of the veterans' service officers shall be a woman having a demonstrated interest in the concerns of women veterans, who shall be responsible for addressing those concerns, and, effective upon the next opening of a veterans' service officer position occurring on or after July 1, 2010, at least two of the veterans' service officers shall be individuals having bilingual proficiency in English and Spanish, within existing authorized positions. At least two of the veterans' service officers shall, in addition to carrying out the duties under this section, be responsible for overseeing and supporting municipalities' compliance with the provisions of section 27-135. Each veterans' service officer shall (i) successfully complete a course in veterans' benefits not later than one year after commencement of employment, (ii) attend the training session described in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, and (iii) be assigned to one of the five congressional districts of the state.

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(3) The office staff shall, at least twice annually, conduct a training course for any member of a municipal veterans advisory committee, director of municipal veterans services or municipal veterans representative. The office staff shall include in such training course a summary of state and federal services and benefits, the requirements under section 27-135, and any assistance the office staff may provide to any such member, director or representative related to such requirements.

(4) (A) The office shall develop a written outreach plan identifying (i) strategies for conducting outreach to veterans and their spouses, eligible dependents and family members for purposes of providing assistance in claims for veterans' services or benefits, and (ii) to the extent possible, specific events and other opportunities to provide such assistance that are sponsored by the office or in which the office is participating. The office shall update such written outreach plan as necessary to improve the efficacy of its outreach efforts.

(B) The manager and each veterans' service officer shall electronically track information relating to outreach conducted or attended by the office, including, but not limited to, the title or type of any outreach event conducted or attended and the number of veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members to whom substantive services or referrals were provided.

(C) The office shall utilize the notifications received from the administrator of each nursing home and assisted living facility in the state, pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of this section, to develop an annual schedule for each veterans' service officer to visit nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The office shall compile any information collected as a result of such visits and provide quarterly reports on such information to the Board of Trustees for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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(D) The office shall provide quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees for the Department of Veterans Affairs on (i) concerns raised by veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members, which concerns shall be summarized by type, frequency and resolution, (ii) petitions filed by veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members received by the commissioner under section 27-102l(d)-54 of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies for the four preceding months, and (iii) copies of any such petitions.

Sec. 16. Section 32-7g of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) There is established within the Department of Economic and Community Development the Small Business Express program. Said program shall provide small businesses with various forms of financial assistance. A small business eligible for assistance through said program shall (1) employ not more than one hundred employees, (2) have operations in Connecticut, and (3) be in good standing with the payment of all state and local taxes and with all state agencies. It shall be the goal of the Department of Economic and Community Development that, on or before July 1, 2026, the Small Business Express program be self-funded and that the default rate of small businesses that receive assistance under said program be not more than twenty per cent.

(b) The Small Business Express program shall consist of various components, including (1) a revolving loan fund, as described in subsection (c) of this section, to support small business growth, (2) at least one minority business revolving loan fund, as described in subsection (d) of this section, to support the growth of minority-owned businesses, (3) a component established in consultation with representatives from Connecticut-based banks and a banking industry association, as described in subsection (e) of this section, and (4) a component established in consultation with Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated, as described in subsection (f) of this section. The

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commissioner may give preference to program applications from disabled veteran-owned businesses. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 32-5a regarding relocation limits, the department may require, as a condition of receiving financial assistance pursuant to this section, that a small business receiving such assistance shall not relocate, as defined in section 32-5a, for five years after receiving such assistance or during the term of the loan, whichever is longer. All other conditions and penalties imposed pursuant to section 32-5a shall continue to apply to such small business. As used in this subsection, (A) "disabled veteran" means a veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who has a disability rating of at least thirty per cent, as determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; and (B) "disabled veteran-owned business" means a small business of which greater than fifty per cent is owned by one or more disabled veterans.

(c) There is established as part of the Small Business Express program a revolving loan fund to provide loans, loan guarantees, loan portfolio guarantees, portfolio insurance and grants.

(d) (1) There is established as part of the Small Business Express program at least one revolving loan fund to provide loans to eligible small businesses that are owned by one or more members of a minority. As used in this subsection, (A) "minority business development entity" means a nonprofit organization (i) having a lending portfolio on or before June 9, 2016, from which at least seventy-five per cent of lending is provided to minority-owned businesses state-wide; and (ii) that provided technical assistance on or before June 9, 2016, provided at least seventy-five per cent of such assistance was provided to minority-owned businesses state-wide; and (B) "minority" means (i) Black Americans, including all persons having origins in any of the Black African racial groups not of Hispanic origin; (ii) Hispanic Americans, including all persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race; (iii) all

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persons having origins in the Iberian Peninsula, including Portugal, regardless of race; (iv) women; (v) Asian Pacific Americans and Pacific islanders; or (vi) American Indians and persons having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and maintaining identifiable tribal affiliations through membership and participation or community identification.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 32-7h, the commissioner shall allocate from the available funding under the Small Business Express program a total of five million dollars for grants-in-aid to not more than two minority business development entities in each of the fiscal years ending June 30, 2016, to June 30, 2020, inclusive, for the purpose of establishing and administering minority business revolving loan funds. Moneys from such funds shall be used to (A) provide loans to eligible small businesses, and (B) fund the administrative costs associated with the provision of such loans by a minority business development entity, provided a minority business development entity may not use more than ten per cent of the amount received as a grant under this section to fund such costs. Such loans shall be used for acquisition or purchase of machinery and equipment, construction or leasehold improvements, relocation expenses, working capital, which may be used for payment of rent, or other business-related expenses, as authorized by the minority business development entity.

(3) Loans from a minority business revolving loan fund may be in amounts from ten thousand dollars to a maximum of five hundred thousand dollars, shall carry a maximum repayment rate of four per cent and shall be for a term of not more than ten years. The minority business development entity shall review and approve loan terms, conditions and collateral requirements in a manner that prioritizes job growth and retention.

(4) Any eligible small business owned by one or more members of a minority may apply for assistance from a minority business revolving

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loan fund, provided the minority business development entity shall give priority to applicants that, as part of their business plan, are creating new jobs that will be maintained for not less than twelve consecutive months.

(5) Loans from a minority business revolving loan fund shall be provided in such a manner that, on or before five years after the date such loan fund is established, the annual funds or revenues derived from investment income, loan repayments or any other sources received by the minority business development entity in connection with such loan fund is sufficient to fund the administrative costs associated with such loan fund.

(6) A minority business development entity receiving a grant pursuant to this subsection shall annually submit to the commissioner a financial audit of grant expenditures until all grant moneys have been expended by such entity. Any such audit shall be prepared by an independent auditor and if the commissioner finds that any such grant is used for purposes that are not in conformity with uses set forth in subdivisions (2) and (3) of this subsection, the commissioner may require repayment of such grant.

(e) The commissioner, in consultation with representatives from Connecticut-based banks and a banking industry association, may establish as part of the Small Business Express program a component operated in collaboration with Connecticut-based banks, which may include, but need not be limited to, loan guarantees, short-term loans used as a bridge to private sector financing and the transfer of loans issued under subsection (c) of this section. Any loans issued under such component shall be used for acquisition or purchase of machinery and equipment, construction or leasehold improvements, relocation expenses, working capital, which may be used for payment of rent, or other business-related expenses, as authorized by the commissioner. The provisions of subsections (c) and (d) of this section shall not be

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construed to apply to such component. Such component shall be administered by Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Community Development. For purposes of this section, "Connecticut-based banks" means banks and out-of-state banks, each as defined in section 36a-2, having deposit-taking branches in the state.

(f) The commissioner, in consultation with Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated, may establish as part of the Small Business Express program a component operated in collaboration with Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated, which may include, but need not be limited to, financial assistance consistent with the provisions and purposes of sections 32-23e, 32-23ii and 32-265. Such component may be administered by Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Community Development.

(g) Not later than February 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the commissioner shall provide a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and bonding, appropriations, commerce and labor. Such report shall include available data on (1) the number of small businesses that received assistance under the Small Business Express program and the general categories of such businesses, (2) the amounts and types of assistance provided, (3) the total number of jobs on the date of application and the number proposed to be created or retained, (4) the most recent employment figures of the small businesses receiving assistance, (5) the default rate of small businesses that received assistance under said program, and (6) the progress of the lenders participating in said program in becoming self-sustainable. The contents of such report shall also be included in the department's annual report.

(h) The commissioner may contract with nongovernmental entities,

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including, but not limited to, nonprofit organizations, economic and community development organizations, lending institutions, and technical assistance providers to carry out the provisions of this section.

Sec. 17. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) Up to \$75,000 of the amount appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, shall be transferred to The University of Connecticut for the purpose of The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut, with the advice of the advisory committee described in subsection (b) of this section, conducting the studies described in subsection (c) of this section. The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs and The University of Connecticut shall enter into a memorandum of understanding to effectuate the provisions of this subsection.

(b) The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall convene an advisory committee to advise The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut in its conduct of the studies described in subsection (c) of this section by coordinating with said school on the design and scope of such studies. The advisory committee shall consist of: (1) The commissioner, or the commissioner's designee; (2) the chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and military affairs; (3) the ranking members of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and military affairs; (4) a representative of a state-wide organization of municipal leaders; (5) a representative of an association representing the interests of assessing officers in the state; and (6) a veteran, as defined in section 27-103 of the general statutes, who is a representative of a veterans' advocacy organization in the state.

(c) (1) The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut, in consultation with the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and

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military affairs, shall conduct a study of the projected impacts on state and municipal finances relating to the modification of (A) the exemption amounts set forth in subdivisions (19) to (26), inclusive, of section 12-81 of the general statutes, and (B) any limits on the amount of property belonging to, or held in trust for, an individual described in any of said subdivisions in order to be eligible for such an exemption. Such study shall account for modifications to such exemption amounts in accordance with the provisions of section 12-62g of the general statutes and for additional exemptions granted in accordance with the provisions of section 12-81g of the general statutes. Not later than January 1, 2027, The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, a report detailing the results of such study and any recommendations for legislation to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and military affairs, finance, revenue and bonding, appropriations and the budgets of state agencies and planning and development.

(2) The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut, in consultation with the manager of the Office of Advocacy and Assistance, shall conduct a study of the efficacy of municipalities in providing assistance to veterans under section 27-135 of the general statutes. Such study shall identify strengths and limitations in the provision of such assistance and develop solutions for implementation to address areas needing improvement, broken down by each municipality. Not later than January 1, 2027, The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut and the manager of the Office of Advocacy and Assistance shall jointly submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, a report detailing the results of such study and any recommendations for legislation to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and military affairs.

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Sec. 18. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section, "veterans benefits matter" means the preparation, presentation or prosecution of any claim affecting any individual who has filed or expressed an intent to file a claim for any benefit, program, service, commodity, function or status to which such individual may be entitled, as determined under the laws and regulations administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs relating to veterans, their dependents, their survivors and any other eligible recipients for any such benefit, program, service, commodity, function or status; and "preparation" includes, but is not limited to, consulting with or giving advice to a claimant or potential claimant in contemplation of filing any such claim, gathering evidence in support of such a claim or completing United States Department of Veterans Affairs forms for submission to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, the Attorney General and the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, shall study the impact on Connecticut residents of (1) unaccredited commercial entities or agents that provide advice, guidance or assistance with veterans benefits matters, and (2) the fee structures of such entities or agents. Not later than February 1, 2026, the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, a report detailing the findings of such study, including, but not limited to, whether predatory practices exist in the provision of advice, guidance or assistance with veterans benefits matters and whether Connecticut residents have been harmed by any such predatory practices, and any recommendations for legislation to afford protections to Connecticut residents from such predatory practices, to the Governor and to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and military affairs.

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Governor's Action:
Approved June 30, 2025