
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 6922

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES REGARDING THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS STATUTES.

SUMMARY

This bill repeals the existing school construction heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC) grant and instead merges it with an existing school construction grant law that provides grants for a broader range of school building projects.

Under the bill, current law's provisions are generally added to the existing Department of Administrative Services (DAS) school construction grant that authorizes the commissioner to award grants without going through the annual priority list process, which the legislature approves annually in a bill (these projects are often referred to as the "non-priority list projects"). The priority list includes major projects such as building new schools or complete renovations of existing schools.

It also repeals generally redundant or obsolete provisions in priority-list school construction law that (1) allow grant refund forgiveness with legislative approval, (2) require school districts to make certain affirmations in their grant applications, and (3) require prior approval for consultant services contracts.

Finally, the bill removes the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) from the school construction grant program. CTECS, which runs the state's 17 technical high schools, is a state agency and its buildings are constructed and paid for under the state laws applying to all state-owned buildings.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 1 & 4 — HVAC GRANTS

This bill repeals the current school HVAC grant and instead merges it with an existing school construction grant that provides funds for a broader range of non-priority list school building projects (such as roof replacements and addressing building code violations). The bill subjects the new HVAC grants to the same application and eligibility criteria as for existing non-priority school building projects (see BACKGROUND).

Under current law, the DAS commissioner may approve grants to reimburse school districts for project costs to install, replace, or upgrade HVAC systems or related improvements. Under the bill, the commissioner may approve grants to upgrade HVAC systems or make other improvements to indoor air quality in school buildings. The bill language does not include installing or replacing systems.

While the statutes for each of these grants do not include a dollar limit, the non-priority list projects tend to be smaller than the priority list projects, ranging from \$100,000 to \$5 million. Priority list projects commonly range from \$1 million to, in some cases, \$200 million.

Inspection and Maintenance Requirements

The bill maintains the following current law requirements:

1. prohibiting awarding grants for HVAC or indoor air quality improvements to recipients unless they have certified compliance with the uniform inspection and evaluation of their school buildings' HVAC systems as required by law (CGS § 10-220(d)),
2. deeming the following expenses as ineligible for reimbursement:
 - (a) routine maintenance and cleaning of the HVAC system and
 - (b) work performed at or on a public school administrative or service facility that is not located or housed within a public school building, and
3. requiring grant recipients to (a) be responsible for the routine

maintenance and cleaning of the HVAC system and (b) provide training to school personnel and maintenance staff concerning the system's proper use and maintenance.

Repealed HVAC Grant Provisions

The bill repeals the following provisions:

1. grant eligibility for charter schools;
2. specific grant eligibility criteria including (a) the age and condition of the current HVAC system or equipment being replaced or upgraded in the school, (b) current air quality issues at the school, (c) the age and condition of the overall school building, (d) the school district's master plan, (e) the availability of maintenance records, (f) the school's routine HVAC maintenance contract or plan, and (g) the applicant's ability to finance the remaining costs;
3. requiring DAS to reconsider grant applications it has denied through the end of FY 26 and provide technical assistance to the denied school board to help the board gain approval of the grant;
4. requiring DAS, if there is not enough grant funding, to prioritize schools with the greatest need based on the eligibility criteria; and
5. requiring an HVAC project to be completed by the end of the next calendar year after the grant was awarded unless extended by DAS for good cause.

§§ 1-2 — REPEALED PROVISIONS

The bill repeals four provisions related to priority-list school construction grants.

Conditions School Districts Affirm in Their Applications (§ 1)

Current law requires superintendents to affirm as part of the grant application that the school district has considered: (1) maximizing natural light, (2) wireless connectivity technology use and feasibility,

and (3) the school safety infrastructure criteria. The bill repeals these affirmations. By law, and unchanged by the bill, the commissioner must review each grant application for a school building project for compliance with the school safety infrastructure criteria.

Grant Refund Forgiveness (§ 1)

By law, any town or school district that abandons, sells, leases, demolishes, or otherwise redirects the use of a school building project for non-public uses during the amortization period must give the state a refund for the unamortized balance of the state grant remaining. Under prior law, this repayment requirement applied if the school building was redirected for any non-public school use purposes. PA 24-151 broadened this provision to allow redirection for other public uses without requiring repayment of the grant.

The bill makes a conforming change by repealing a provision allowing a town or school district to seek repayment forgiveness if a school building is redirected for public use. A town or school district must still repay the remaining grant if the building is redirected for non-public uses.

The bill also eliminates the requirement that DAS must include any proposed forgiveness on the annual priority list. The forgiveness was deemed approved when the General Assembly approved the priority list.

Prior Approval for Consultant Contracts (§ 2)

The bill repeals the requirement that consultant services contracts must have prior approval from DAS to be eligible for state grant reimbursement. Under current practice, DAS already conducts compliance reviews through the grant process, which includes reviewing these contracts.

§§ 1, 3 & 4 — REMOVAL OF CTECS FROM SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION GRANT PROGRAM

The bill removes CTECS from the school construction grant program. Under current law, CTECS projects must undergo the school construction process, including being on the construction priority list

that DAS submits to the legislature each year for approval to have the project's cost fully covered by the state. As a state agency, CTECS projects are already 100% state-funded and do not require the local approval and funding match that the school construction grant program requires of school boards and towns. (Chapter 60 of the General Statutes governs the state building construction project process.)

The bill also repeals a related requirement for DAS to submit a biennial status report on all current and pending CTECS school construction projects and their costs to the Education Committee.

BACKGROUND

Non-Priority List School Building Projects

The law authorizes the DAS commissioner to award grants on a case-by-case basis without going through the annual priority list process, which requires legislative approval. Non-priority list projects include:

1. assisting school building projects to remedy damage from fire and catastrophe;
2. correcting safety, health, and other code violations;
3. replacing roofs, including the replacement or installation of skylights as part of the project;
4. remedying a certified school indoor air quality emergency;
5. installing insulation for exterior walls and attics; and
6. purchasing and installing a limited use and access elevators, windows, photovoltaic panels, wind generation systems, building management systems, a public school administrative or service facility or, within certain limitations, portable classroom buildings.

Once a grant is approved, projects must also get approval from DAS architects for each biddable project stage.

Under the law, school boards and towns may receive a

reimbursement grant for 20%-80% of eligible expenses, based on the town's ranking among all Connecticut towns as generally measured by their grand list (CGS § 10-285a).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 40 Nay 0 (03/12/2025)