
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 1243

AN ACT CONCERNING BUS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR VETERANS AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Transportation (DOT), by August 1, 2025, to create a program allowing certain public school students in grades 9-12 to ride state-owned or -controlled public buses for free or at a reduced cost. Separately, it allows veterans to ride these buses at no cost.

Under the student program, local or regional boards of education (“school boards”) may apply to DOT for bus passes and distribute or sell them to their students. The bill allows the department to negotiate program terms and conditions with each applicant, which must include (1) the amount of compensation or reimbursement required from the school board and (2) any limitations on the times of day students may ride the buses. DOT may enter into program contracts with school boards, which must have certain terms and be approved by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) (see below).

The bill requires DOT to publish information on the program and application process on its website in a way that maximizes awareness of and participation in the program. Starting by August 1, 2026, the department must annually report to OPM on the financial data and pass utilization for each program contract.

Regarding veterans, to qualify for free fare, the bill requires that they present a Department of Motor Vehicles-issued driver’s license or identity card with a veteran designation to the bus driver or employee responsible for fare inspection, as applicable. A “veteran” is anyone honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions, or released with an other than honorable discharge based on a qualifying

condition, from active service in the armed forces (i.e. the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, Air Force, and any of their reserve components, including the Connecticut National Guard when under federal service) (CGS § 27-103).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

STUDENT BUS PROGRAM CONTRACTS

Under the bill, program contracts between DOT and participating school boards must meet certain requirements. Specifically, DOT's negotiated compensation or reimbursement from a school board must be in an amount the department deems necessary to ensure its bus public transportation service expenditures are not increased by the program (including any administrative program costs). Contracts are valid for up to two years after OPM approves them, however, a board's first contract cannot exceed one year.

Before renewing a program contract, the bill requires DOT to reevaluate compensation from the participating school board. In doing so, it must consider (1) prior bus pass utilization information and (2) any increases in public bus service expenditures.

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

SB 1150 (File 252), reported favorably by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to waive the renewal fee for veterans with the veteran designation on their current driver's license or identity card.

HB 6728 (File 259), reported favorably by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, exempts veterans from paying to ride state-owned or -controlled public buses on Veterans' Day.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 30 Nay 4 (03/19/2025)