
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 1492

AN ACT CONCERNING LAW ENFORCEMENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

SUMMARY

§§ 1 & 21 — LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSION PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

Requires DESPP to develop a plan to promote the law enforcement profession and appropriates \$500,000 for this purpose

§ 2 — POLICE CADET/EXPLORER PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Requires DESPP to (1) employ a full-time program coordinator to oversee police cadet and explorer programs and (2) allocate \$5,000 each fiscal year to every municipal police department that operates or plans to operate these programs

§ 3 — POLICE BASIC TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT GRANTS

Requires DESPP to reimburse municipal police departments for the cost of police officer basic training through an annual grant program

§ 4 — STUDY AND PILOT PROGRAM ON SUBSTITUTING COLLEGE COURSES FOR POLICE BASIC TRAINING

Requires POST to (1) study whether college-level criminal justice courses can be substituted for its police basic training courses and (2) create a related pilot program at the University of New Haven

§ 5 — LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT NONCITIZENS AS POLICE OFFICERS

Prohibits denying someone certification or employment as a police officer only because he or she is a lawful permanent resident noncitizen

§ 6 — POLICE SALARY INCREASE GRANTS

Requires DESPP, starting in FY 26, to give annual grants to the top 10 most populous municipalities to increase their police officers' salaries

§ 7 — RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICE BONUSES

Requires DESPP and POST to create a report with recommendations on awarding bonuses to new and existing police officers

§ 8 — HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES PATHWAY

Requires the Board of Regents, UConn Board of Trustees, and POST to take specific actions towards helping police officers earn higher education degrees

§§ 9-11 — TUITION WAIVERS FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Provides tuition waivers for the state's public colleges and universities to police officers employed for at least two years and any dependent child of an officer employed for at least five years

§ 12 — LOAN REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Requires OHE to create an annual grant program to give up to \$5,000 a year, for up to 10 years, to police officers who have been employed for at least 10 years to reimburse their federal or state educational loans

§ 13 — PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

Exempts from property taxes \$10,000 of the property of police officers residing in distressed municipalities

§ 14 — CONNECTICUT HOUSING FINANCE AUTHORITY (CHFA) ASSISTANCE FOR HOME PURCHASES

Requires enhanced assistance by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to police officers seeking to buy a house in the communities they serve

§ 15 — STUDIES ON DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLANS AND RETIREMENT MEDICAL BENEFITS

Requires the State Retirement Commission to study (1) deferred retirement option plans towards developing one for police officers and (2) existing retirement medical benefits provided to police officers and their spouses

§ 16 — STATE POLICE OFFICER RETIREES RETURNING TO SERVICE

Directs the governor to enter negotiations to amend the state police officers collective bargaining agreement to set conditions for retired officers to return to service

§ 17 — MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICER RETIREES RETURNING TO SERVICE

Generally, requires collective bargaining agreements between municipalities and municipal police officers to allow retired, POST-certified officers to return to part- or full-time employment

§ 18 — VOLUNTEER POLICE AUXILIARY TASK FORCE

Creates a nine-member task force to (1) study the volunteer police auxiliary force and (2) make recommendations for improving and maximizing it

§ 19 — DRONE PILOT PROGRAM

Gives drones to law enforcement units in FY 26 through a DESPP pilot program

§ 20 — POLICE MENTAL HEALTH

Requires DESPP to investigate ways to develop and enhance programs addressing police officer mental health

BACKGROUND

SUMMARY

This bill requires various entities to develop and implement certain plans or pilot programs, or study and report, on ways to recruit and

retain police officers and related matters.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various; see below.

§§ 1 & 21 — LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSION PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

Requires DESPP to develop a plan to promote the law enforcement profession and appropriates \$500,000 for this purpose

The bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) commissioner, by January 1, 2026, to develop, coordinate, and implement a plan to promote the law enforcement profession using a variety of media, including social media. In developing the campaign, the commissioner must consult with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association, in-state higher education institutions, and any other entities he deems appropriate.

The bill appropriates \$500,000 from the General Fund for FY 26 to DESPP for the campaign.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 2 — POLICE CADET/EXPLORER PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Requires DESPP to (1) employ a full-time program coordinator to oversee police cadet and explorer programs and (2) allocate \$5,000 each fiscal year to every municipal police department that operates or plans to operate these programs

The bill requires DESPP to employ a full-time program coordinator to coordinate and oversee police cadet and explorer programs, implement state standards and a best practices guide for them, and encourage creating and expanding the programs throughout the state.

Starting with FY 26, the department must annually allocate \$5,000 to each municipal police department that operates, or plans to operate, a cadet or explorer program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 3 — POLICE BASIC TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT GRANTS

Requires DESPP to reimburse municipal police departments for the cost of police officer basic training through an annual grant program

The bill requires DESPP to create a grant program for reimbursing

municipal police departments for the cost of police officer basic training. The department must (1) set the grant application process and forms and (2) post a description of the program that includes the eligibility criteria and application process. The posting must be in a conspicuous place on DESPP's website by October 1, 2025. Grants must be provided annually starting FY 26.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 4 — STUDY AND PILOT PROGRAM ON SUBSTITUTING COLLEGE COURSES FOR POLICE BASIC TRAINING

Requires POST to (1) study whether college-level criminal justice courses can be substituted for its police basic training courses and (2) create a related pilot program at the University of New Haven

The bill requires the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) to examine the criminal justice courses offered by colleges and universities in Connecticut and determine (1) if the courses equal those required as part of a police officer's minimum basic law enforcement training at the Connecticut Police Academy and (2) under what conditions a police trainee would not need to complete an academy course because he or she had already completed an equivalent college-level course. By January 1, 2026, POST must submit a report of its examination and determination to the Public Safety and Security Committee.

By that same date, the bill requires POST to establish a pilot program with the University of New Haven to allow someone who attends the police academy for basic training to complete it by taking (1) courses related to legal issues at the university and (2) the remaining courses at the academy.

By January 1, 2027, POST must submit a report to the Public Safety and Security Committee that:

1. describes the pilot program;
2. analyzes the program's impact on police recruitment and training procedures and resources; and

3. recommends whether to end, continue, revise, or expand the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 5 — LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT NONCITIZENS AS POLICE OFFICERS

Prohibits denying someone certification or employment as a police officer only because he or she is a lawful permanent resident noncitizen

The bill prohibits POST from denying police officer certification and law enforcement units from denying someone employment as a police officer only because he or she is a lawful permanent resident noncitizen. (See BACKGROUND for the bill’s definition of “law enforcement units” and “police officer.”)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 6 — POLICE SALARY INCREASE GRANTS

Requires DESPP, starting in FY 26, to give annual grants to the top 10 most populous municipalities to increase their police officers’ salaries

The bill requires DESPP to create a grant program for increasing police officer salaries in the top 10 most populous municipalities. Grants must be provided annually starting in FY 26. The bill prohibits recipients from using the grant for any purpose other than increasing their police officers’ salaries.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 7 — RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICE BONUSES

Requires DESPP and POST to create a report with recommendations on awarding bonuses to new and existing police officers

By January 1, 2026, the bill requires DESPP and POST to jointly submit a report to the Public Safety and Security Committee with recommendations on awarding bonuses to encourage individuals to begin and continue careers as police officers. Specifically, the report must include recommendations for a schedule of bonuses to be awarded to (1) new officers when they begin service and (2) existing officers based on years of service.

Under the bill, DESPP and POST may consult with municipal police chiefs and anyone else in developing their recommendations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 8 — HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES PATHWAY

Requires the Board of Regents, UConn Board of Trustees, and POST to take specific actions towards helping police officers earn higher education degrees

By January 1, 2026, the bill requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education, UConn's Board of Trustees, and POST to jointly submit a report to the Public Safety and Security Committee that includes a career pathway and schedule that they must develop. The pathway must help police officers earn higher education degrees and include a schedule of credits that officers may receive at UConn (and all its campuses) and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities for the training they received in order to be certified, and maintain their certification, as police officers.

The boards and POST must promote this pathway to encourage police officers to earn higher education degrees, and their report must describe their plans for promoting it.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 9-11 — TUITION WAIVERS FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Provides tuition waivers for the state's public colleges and universities to police officers employed for at least two years and any dependent child of an officer employed for at least five years

The bill requires UConn, the Connecticut State University System, and the regional community-technical colleges to waive tuition for (1) a police officer who has at least two years of service as an officer in Connecticut and (2) any dependent child of a police officer who has at least five years of service as an officer in the state. The waivers apply to tuition fees for any undergraduate or graduate degree programs as applicable.

Under existing law, the schools must waive tuition for certain other categories of students (including surviving children of police officers

who were killed in the line of duty).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 12 — LOAN REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Requires OHE to create an annual grant program to give up to \$5,000 a year, for up to 10 years, to police officers who have been employed for at least 10 years to reimburse their federal or state educational loans

The bill requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE), in collaboration with DESPP, to create a loan reimbursement program for individuals employed as police officers in Connecticut for at least 10 years and who otherwise satisfy OHE's eligibility criteria.

Under the program, eligible officers may receive an annual grant to help reimburse their federal or state educational loan payments for up to 10 years. The grant may be for up to 10% of their loans, but no more than \$5,000 in any year, and only to reimburse loan payments made while the person is employed as a police officer.

Under the bill, the OHE commissioner sets the program application process. The office may accept gifts, grants, and donations from any source, public or private, for the program. Grants must be awarded annually starting in FY 26. The bill prohibits unexpended funds from lapsing at the end of a fiscal year and instead requires that they be available for the next fiscal year.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

§ 13 — PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

Exempts from property taxes \$10,000 of the property of police officers residing in distressed municipalities

The bill exempts from property tax \$10,000 of property belonging to, or held in trust for, a police officer who resides in a Connecticut distressed municipality. (See BACKGROUND for existing law's definition of "distressed municipality.")

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025, and applicable to assessment years starting on or after that date.

**§ 14 — CONNECTICUT HOUSING FINANCE AUTHORITY (CHFA)
ASSISTANCE FOR HOME PURCHASES**

Requires enhanced assistance by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to police officers seeking to buy a house in the communities they serve

The bill requires CHFA to enhance assistance available to police officers who seek to purchase a house as an officer's principal residence in the community he or she serves. This assistance must prioritize first-time homebuyers and include mortgage or down payment assistance or any other appropriate housing subsidies. The terms of any mortgage assistance must allow the mortgagee to realize a reasonable portion of the equity gain when the property is sold.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

**§ 15 — STUDIES ON DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLANS
AND RETIREMENT MEDICAL BENEFITS**

Requires the State Retirement Commission to study (1) deferred retirement option plans towards developing one for police officers and (2) existing retirement medical benefits provided to police officers and their spouses

The bill requires the State Retirement Commission to study:

1. deferred retirement option plans and make recommendations for developing a state-administered plan open to any police officer in Connecticut and
2. the types and levels of retirement medical benefits provided to police officers and their spouses in the state and make recommendations on providing the benefits.

As part of its studies, the commission may consult with DESPP, municipal police departments, and any other entities it deems appropriate. The commission must report its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Security Committee by January 1, 2026.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 16 — STATE POLICE OFFICER RETIREES RETURNING TO SERVICE

Directs the governor to enter negotiations to amend the state police officers collective bargaining agreement to set conditions for retired officers to return to service

The bill requires the governor, by October 1, 2025, to start negotiating with the State Police officers union to seek amendments to their collective bargaining agreement that would set conditions under which a retired officer may return to service and (1) resume earning credit toward retirement benefits, in the same way as the retired officer did before retirement, and (2) be eligible for earning his or her pre-retirement benefits.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 17 — MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICER RETIREES RETURNING TO SERVICE

Generally, requires collective bargaining agreements between municipalities and municipal police officers to allow retired, POST-certified officers to return to part- or full-time employment

The bill requires each collective bargaining agreement entered into or amended on or after July 1, 2025, between a municipality and a union that represents the municipality's police officers, to allow officers who retire and remain POST-certified to return to part- or full-time employment as a police officer with the municipality while collecting his or her pension, to the maximum extent allowed under state and federal law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 18 — VOLUNTEER POLICE AUXILIARY TASK FORCE

Creates a nine-member task force to (1) study the volunteer police auxiliary force and (2) make recommendations for improving and maximizing it

The bill creates a nine-member task force to study the volunteer police auxiliary force and recommend ways to improve its organization and maximize the services that auxiliary state police and municipal police officers may provide.

The task force members must be appointed within 30 days after the bill passes. The members and appointees are as follows:

1. two appointments by the governor;
2. one appointment each by the top six legislative leaders; and
3. the DESPP commissioner, or his designee.

The bill allows legislative appointees to be General Assembly members. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the task force's chairpersons from the members. The chairpersons must schedule and hold the first task force meeting within 60 days after the bill passes, and the Public Safety and Security Committee administrative staff must serve as the task force's administrative staff.

The bill requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Security Committee by January 1, 2026. The task force terminates on that date or when it submits the report, whichever is later.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 19 — DRONE PILOT PROGRAM

Gives drones to law enforcement units in FY 26 through a DESPP pilot program

For FY 26, the bill requires DESPP to develop a pilot program to give law enforcement units unmanned aerial vehicles (i.e. drones) to respond to service requests, assist units in assessing the dangers and needs at the scene of a request before a police officer arrives, and enhance police officer safety and the services that units provide to the public.

By October 1, 2025, the department must (1) develop the program's eligibility criteria, application forms, and deadlines; (2) post a description of the program on DESPP's website that includes the criteria, forms, and deadlines; and (3) notify units about the opportunity to apply for the program. In identifying units for participation, DESPP must give priority to those that would most benefit from the program, including those with reduced staffing levels.

By January 1, 2027, each participating unit must submit a report to DESPP describing the unit's use of its drones, their impact on its ability

to serve the public, and any recommendations for continuing or improving the pilot program.

DESPP must also report, by July 1, 2027, to the Public Safety and Security Committee on the program. The report must include (1) information on the units that applied, which ones were chosen to participate, and the reasons for choosing them; (2) a summary of the reports submitted by participating units; (3) an analysis of the pilot program's results; and (4) recommendations on continuing or expanding the pilot, funding needs, and any necessary legislation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 20 — POLICE MENTAL HEALTH

Requires DESPP to investigate ways to develop and enhance programs addressing police officer mental health

The bill requires the DESPP commissioner to investigate ways to develop and enhance programs and initiatives addressing the mental health needs of police officers.

The investigation must examine peer-to-peer support programs, programs that train officers to help themselves and fellow officers deal with work-related mental health issues, programs that employ a psychologist or other mental health professionals within a unit to help officers with their mental health needs, employee assistance programs, and any other programs and resources that may address officers' mental health needs.

In its investigation, DESPP must consult with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, POST, the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association, law enforcement units throughout the state, employee organizations that represent police officers, and any other entities the commissioner deems appropriate.

By January 1, 2026, the DESPP commissioner must submit a report to the Public Safety and Security Committee with the investigation results; a list of programs, services, and resources identified as best practices that could be implemented by units across the state to address officers'

mental health needs; and any legislative recommendations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

BACKGROUND

Police Officer and Law Enforcement Unit Definitions

By law and under sections 5, 7-13, 15, 17, and 20 of the bill, “police officers” are sworn members of an organized local police department or the State Police; appointed constables who perform criminal law enforcement duties; special police officers appointed under law (e.g., public assistance fraud investigators); or any members of a law enforcement unit who perform police duties (CGS § 7-294a(9)). A “law enforcement unit” is any state or municipal agency or department (or tribal agency or department created and governed under a memorandum of agreement) whose primary functions include enforcing criminal or traffic laws; preserving public order; protecting life and property; or preventing, detecting, or investigating crime (CGS § 7-294a(8)).

Distressed Municipality

The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) annually ranks municipalities based on their relative economic and fiscal distress and designates the top 25 as “distressed municipalities” (CGS § 32-9p(b)). Most recently, in 2024, DECD designated the following municipalities as distressed: Ansonia, Bridgeport, Chaplin, Derby, East Hartford, Griswold, Hartford, Lisbon, Mansfield, Meriden, Montville, Naugatuck, New Britain, New London, Norwich, Plainfield, Plymouth, Putnam, Sprague, Sterling, Torrington, Waterbury, West Haven, Winchester, and Windham.

Related Act

PA 25-1, among other things, generally prohibits, beginning on varying dates, state agencies, municipalities, and those who contract with either from purchasing or using certain drones assembled or manufactured by a covered foreign entity (e.g., China or Russia) (§ 5). It also prohibits, with certain exceptions, (1) operating drones near critical infrastructure facilities or to surveil these facilities or (2) equipping an

aircraft or drone with a deadly weapon or certain other dangerous devices.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 29 Nay 0 (03/18/2025)