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## OLR Bill Analysis

**sSB 1492 (File 448, as amended by Senate "A")\***

### ***AN ACT CONCERNING LAW ENFORCEMENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill requires various state entities to study and develop programs to help recruit and retain police officers. Specifically, it requires:

1. the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) to (a) study whether college-level criminal justice courses can be substituted for its police basic training courses and (b) create a related pilot program at the University of New Haven;
2. the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) and POST to create a report with recommendations on awarding bonuses to new and existing police officers;
3. the Board of Regents, UConn Board of Trustees, and POST to take specific actions towards helping police officers earn higher education degrees;
4. DESPP, in conjunction with the State Board of Labor Relations (SBLR), to study the feasibility of entering negotiations to amend the state police officers collective bargaining agreement to set conditions for retired officers to return to service; and
5. DESPP to investigate ways to develop and enhance programs addressing police officer mental health.

\*Senate Amendment "A" (1) eliminates from the underlying bill provisions on a law enforcement profession promotion campaign, police cadet/explorer program coordinator, basic training reimbursement grants, lawful permanent resident noncitizens as police

officers, police salary increase grants, tuition waivers for police officers and dependent children, loan reimbursement program, property tax exemption, home purchase assistance, deferred retirement benefits study, returning municipal police officer retirees, volunteer police auxiliary task force, and drone pilot program and (2) modifies a provision on state police officer retirees returning to service, instead requiring a feasibility study.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### **§ 1 — STUDY AND PILOT PROGRAM ON SUBSTITUTING COLLEGE COURSES FOR POLICE BASIC TRAINING**

The bill requires 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.

**§ 2 — RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICE BONUSES**

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.

**§ 3 — HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES PATHWAY**

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.

**§ 4 — STATE POLICE OFFICER RETIREES RETURNING TO SERVICE STUDY**

The bill requires DESPP, in conjunction with SBLR, to study the feasibility of the state entering into negotiations 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. DESPP and SBLR must jointly submit a report with the results of the study by

January 1, 2026, to the Public Safety and Security Committee.

## **§ 5 — POLICE 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 law enforcement 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.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Police Officer and Law Enforcement Unit Definitions***

By law and under sections 2 and 5 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)).

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea    29    Nay   0    (03/18/2025)