



General Assembly

Amendment

January Session, 2025

LCO No. 8982



Offered by:

REP. FOSTER, 57th Dist.

SEN. HONIG, 8th Dist.

REP. ANDERSON, 62nd Dist.

SEN. GORDON, 35th Dist.

To: House Bill No. 6438

File No. 54

Cal. No. 62

"AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' AFFAIRS IN CONNECTICUT."

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the
2 following in lieu thereof:

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

7 Sec. 2. Subsection (a) of section 17b-28i of the general statutes is
8 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
9 *2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

10 (a) To the extent permissible by federal law, the Commissioner of
11 Social Services shall disregard [federal] (1) United States Department of
12 Veterans Affairs-administered Aid and Attendance pension benefits

13 that are granted to a veteran or the surviving spouse of such veteran
14 when determining income eligibility for the state's Medicare savings,
15 medical assistance and energy assistance programs administered under
16 section 17b-2, and (2) all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-
17 administered non-service-connected pension benefits and Housebound
18 pension benefits that are granted to a veteran or the surviving spouse of
19 such veteran when determining income eligibility for the state's
20 Medicare savings, HUSKY A, HUSKY D and energy assistance
21 programs administered under section 17b-2. As used in this subsection,
22 "veteran" has the same meaning as provided in section 27-103, and
23 "HUSKY A" and "HUSKY D" have the same meanings as provided in
24 section 17b-290.

25 Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 17b-104 of the general statutes is
26 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
27 *2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

28 (a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall administer the program
29 of state supplementation to the Supplemental Security Income Program
30 provided for by the Social Security Act and state law. The commissioner
31 may delegate any powers and authority to any deputy, assistant,
32 investigator or supervisor, who shall have, within the scope of the
33 power and authority so delegated, all of the power and authority of the
34 Commissioner of Social Services. The standard of need for the
35 temporary family assistance program shall be fifty-five per cent of the
36 federal poverty level. The commissioner shall make a reinvestigation, at
37 least every twelve months, of all cases receiving aid from the state,
38 except that such reinvestigation may be conducted every twenty-four
39 months for recipients of assistance to the elderly or disabled with stable
40 circumstances, and shall maintain all case records of the several
41 programs administered by the Department of Social Services so that
42 such records show, at all times, full information with respect to
43 eligibility of the applicant or recipient. In the determination of need
44 under any public assistance program, such income or earnings shall be
45 disregarded as federal law requires, and such income or earnings may

46 be disregarded as federal law permits. In determining eligibility, the
47 commissioner shall disregard from income (1) all United States
48 Department of Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected
49 pension benefits, Aid and Attendance pension benefits and
50 Housebound pension benefits that are granted to a veteran, as defined
51 [under] in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran, and
52 (2) any tax refund or advance payment with respect to a refundable
53 credit to the same extent such refund or advance payment would be
54 disregarded under 26 USC 6409 in any federal program or state or local
55 program financed in whole or in part with federal funds. The
56 commissioner shall encourage and promulgate such incentive earning
57 programs as are permitted by federal law and regulations.

58 Sec. 4. Subsection (c) of section 17b-191 of the general statutes is
59 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
60 *2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

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

79 such person enters treatment. No person whose benefits from the
80 temporary family assistance program have terminated as a result of
81 time-limited benefits or for failure to comply with a program
82 requirement shall be eligible for cash assistance under the program.

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

86 (a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall increase income
87 disregards used to determine eligibility by the Department of Social
88 Services for the federal Qualified Medicare Beneficiary, the Specified
89 Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary and the Qualifying Individual
90 programs, administered in accordance with the provisions of 42 USC
91 1396d(p), by such amounts that shall result in persons with income that
92 is (1) less than two hundred eleven per cent of the federal poverty level
93 qualifying for the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary program, (2) at or
94 above two hundred eleven per cent of the federal poverty level but less
95 than two hundred thirty-one per cent of the federal poverty level
96 qualifying for the Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary program,
97 and (3) at or above two hundred thirty-one per cent of the federal
98 poverty level but less than two hundred forty-six per cent of the federal
99 poverty level qualifying for the Qualifying Individual program.

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

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

114 Sec. 6. Subsection (a) of section 17b-261 of the general statutes is
115 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
116 *2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

117 (a) Medical assistance shall be provided for any otherwise eligible
118 person (1) whose income, including any available support from legally
119 liable relatives and the income of the person's spouse or dependent
120 child, is not more than one hundred fifty-nine per cent, pending
121 approval of a federal waiver applied for pursuant to subsection (e) of
122 this section, of the benefit amount paid to a person with no income
123 under the temporary family assistance program, and (2) if such person
124 is an institutionalized individual as defined in Section 1917 of the Social
125 Security Act, 42 USC 1396p(h)(3), and has not made an assignment or
126 transfer or other disposition of property for less than fair market value
127 for the purpose of establishing eligibility for benefits or assistance under
128 this section. Any such disposition shall be treated in accordance with
129 Section 1917(c) of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396p(c). Any
130 disposition of property made on behalf of an applicant or recipient or
131 the spouse of an applicant or recipient by a guardian, conservator,
132 person authorized to make such disposition pursuant to a power of
133 attorney or other person so authorized by law shall be attributed to such
134 applicant, recipient or spouse. A disposition of property ordered by a
135 court shall be evaluated in accordance with the standards applied to any
136 other such disposition for the purpose of determining eligibility. The
137 commissioner shall establish the standards for eligibility for medical
138 assistance at one hundred fifty-nine per cent of the benefit amount paid
139 to a household of equal size with no income under the temporary family
140 assistance program. In determining eligibility, the commissioner shall
141 not consider as income United States Department of Veterans Affairs-
142 administered Aid and Attendance pension benefits that are granted to a
143 veteran, as defined in section 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such
144 veteran. Except as provided in section 17b-277 and section 17b-292, the

145 medical assistance program shall provide coverage to persons under the
146 age of nineteen with household income up to one hundred ninety-six
147 per cent of the federal poverty level without an asset limit and to
148 persons under the age of nineteen, who qualify for coverage under
149 Section 1931 of the Social Security Act, with household income not
150 exceeding one hundred ninety-six per cent of the federal poverty level
151 without an asset limit, and their parents and needy caretaker relatives,
152 who qualify for coverage under Section 1931 of the Social Security Act,
153 with household income not exceeding one hundred thirty-three per cent
154 of the federal poverty level without an asset limit. Such levels shall be
155 based on the regional differences in such benefit amount, if applicable,
156 unless such levels based on regional differences are not in conformance
157 with federal law. Any income in excess of the applicable amounts shall
158 be applied as may be required by said federal law, and assistance shall
159 be granted for the balance of the cost of authorized medical assistance.
160 The Commissioner of Social Services shall provide applicants for
161 assistance under this section, at the time of application, with a written
162 statement advising them of (A) the effect of an assignment or transfer or
163 other disposition of property on eligibility for benefits or assistance, (B)
164 the effect that having income that exceeds the limits prescribed in this
165 subsection will have with respect to program eligibility, and (C) the
166 availability of, and eligibility for, services provided by the Connecticut
167 Home Visiting System, established pursuant to section 17b-751b. For
168 coverage dates on or after January 1, 2014, the department shall use the
169 modified adjusted gross income financial eligibility rules set forth in
170 Section 1902(e)(14) of the Social Security Act and the implementing
171 regulations to determine eligibility for HUSKY A, HUSKY B and
172 HUSKY D applicants, as defined in section 17b-290. To the extent
173 permissible under federal law, the Commissioner of Social Services shall
174 disregard all United States Department of Veterans Affairs-
175 administered non-service-connected pension benefits, Aid and
176 Attendance pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits that are
177 granted to a veteran or the surviving spouse of such veteran when
178 determining income eligibility for HUSKY A and HUSKY D applicants.
179 Persons who are determined ineligible for assistance pursuant to this

180 section shall be provided a written statement notifying such persons of
181 their ineligibility and advising such persons of their potential eligibility
182 for one of the other insurance affordability programs as defined in 42
183 CFR 435.4.

184 Sec. 7. Subsection (l) of section 17b-342 of the general statutes is
185 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
186 *2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

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

197 Sec. 8. Subsection (a) of section 17b-801 of the general statutes is
198 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
199 *2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025*):

200 (a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall administer a state-
201 appropriated fuel assistance program to provide, within available
202 appropriations, fuel assistance to elderly and disabled persons whose
203 household gross income is above the income eligibility guidelines for
204 the Connecticut energy assistance program but does not exceed two
205 hundred per cent of federal poverty guidelines. The income eligibility
206 guidelines for the state-appropriated fuel assistance program shall be
207 determined, annually, by the Commissioner of Social Services, in
208 conjunction with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management.
209 In determining eligibility, the commissioner shall [not consider as
210 income] disregard from income all United States Department of
211 Veterans Affairs-administered non-service-connected pension benefits,

212 Aid and Attendance pension benefits and Housebound pension benefits
213 that are granted to a veteran, as defined under section 27-103, or the
214 surviving spouse of such veteran. The commissioner may adopt
215 regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, to
216 implement the provisions of this subsection.

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

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

228 (b) In order to defray part of the cost of the higher education
229 institutional programs at the constituent units of the state system of
230 higher education, tuition shall be charged as provided in [said] sections
231 10a-77, as amended by this act, 10a-99, as amended by this act, and 10a-
232 105, as amended by this act, for each full-time student or shall be
233 prorated in the case of a student carrying less than seventy-five per cent
234 of the credit hours defined as a full-time load by the institution. Any
235 person enrolled in and paying extension fees for a course in an
236 educational extension program, [or] including for a course in a summer
237 or winter school session or intersession, shall not be charged tuition for
238 such course.

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

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

247 (d) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition at any of
248 the regional community-technical colleges (1) for any dependent child
249 of a person whom the armed forces of the United States has declared to
250 be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war while serving in
251 such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted
252 for admission to such institution and is a resident of the state at the time
253 such child is accepted for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the
254 provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in
255 section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in
256 section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in
257 time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military
258 service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to such
259 institution and is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is
260 accepted for admission to such institution. Said board shall also waive
261 for any such veteran the payment of any extension fees under section
262 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (3)
263 for any resident of the state sixty-two years of age or older, provided, at
264 the end of the regular registration period, there are enrolled in the
265 course a sufficient number of students other than those residents eligible
266 for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to offer the course in which
267 such resident intends to enroll and there is space available in such
268 course after accommodating all such students, (4) for any student
269 attending the Connecticut State Police Academy who is enrolled in a law
270 enforcement program at said academy offered in coordination with a
271 regional community-technical college which accredits courses taken in
272 such program, (5) for any active member of the Connecticut Army or
273 Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by the Adjutant General
274 or such Adjutant General's designee as a member in good standing of
275 the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for admission to such
276 institution on a full-time or part-time basis in an undergraduate degree-
277 granting program. Said board shall also waive for any such member the

278 payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as amended by this
279 act, for educational extension programs, (6) for any dependent child of
280 a (A) police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or
281 auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or
282 member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D)
283 state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7)
284 for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or surviving
285 spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of this state, (8)
286 for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a
287 multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and
288 Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, and (9) for any resident of the state
289 who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was
290 killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed
291 forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was
292 a resident of this state. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in
293 accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives
294 educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be
295 reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans
296 and members of the National Guard described in subdivision (5) of this
297 subsection shall be given the same status as students not receiving
298 tuition waivers in registering for courses at regional community-
299 technical colleges. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as
300 used in this subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for
301 less than one year.

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

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

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

326 (f) Said board shall set aside from its anticipated regional community-
327 technical college tuition revenue, an amount not less than that required
328 by said board's tuition policy. Such funds shall be used to provide
329 tuition waivers, tuition remissions, grants for educational expenses and
330 student employment for residents enrolled in regional community-
331 technical colleges as full or part-time matriculated students in a degree-
332 granting program, or enrolled in a precollege remedial program, who
333 demonstrate substantial financial need. Said board may also set aside
334 from its anticipated tuition revenue an additional amount equal to one
335 per cent of [said] such tuition revenue for financial assistance for
336 students who would not otherwise be eligible for financial assistance
337 but who do have a financial need as determined by the college in
338 accordance with this subsection. In determining such financial need, the
339 college shall exclude the value of equity in the principal residence of the
340 student's parents or legal guardians, or in the student's principal
341 residence if the student is not considered to be a dependent of his
342 parents or legal guardians and shall assess the earnings of a dependent
343 student at the rate of thirty per cent.

344 (g) The Regional Community-Technical Colleges Operating Fund

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

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

355 (d) Said board shall waive the payment of tuition fees for
356 undergraduate and graduate degree programs at the Connecticut State
357 University System (1) for any dependent child of a person whom the
358 armed forces of the United States has declared to be missing in action or
359 to have been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed forces after
360 January 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission to such
361 institution and is a resident of the state at the time such child is accepted
362 for admission to such institution, (2) subject to the provisions of
363 subsection (e) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in section 27-
364 103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in section 27-103,
365 except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in time of war" shall
366 not include time spent in attendance at a military service academy,
367 which veteran has been accepted for admission to such institution and
368 is domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is accepted for
369 admission to such institution. Said board shall also waive for any such
370 veteran the payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26, as
371 amended by this act, for educational extension programs, (3) for any
372 resident of the state sixty-two years of age or older who has been
373 accepted for admission to such institution, provided (A) such resident
374 is enrolled in a degree-granting program, or (B) at the end of the regular
375 registration period, there are enrolled in the course a sufficient number
376 of students other than those residents eligible for waivers pursuant to
377 this subdivision to offer the course in which such resident intends to

378 enroll and there is space available in such course after accommodating
379 all such students, (4) for any student attending the Connecticut Police
380 Academy who is enrolled in a law enforcement program at said
381 academy offered in coordination with the university which accredits
382 courses taken in such program, (5) for any active member of the
383 Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has been certified by
384 the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's designee as a member
385 in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted for
386 admission to such institution on a full-time or part-time basis in an
387 undergraduate or graduate degree-granting program. Said board shall
388 also waive for any such member the payment of any extension fees
389 under section 10a-26, as amended by this act, for educational extension
390 programs, (6) for any dependent child of a (A) police officer, as defined
391 in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or auxiliary police officer, (B)
392 firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire
393 company, (C) municipal employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in
394 section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7) for any resident of this state
395 who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist
396 victim who was a resident of the state, (8) for any dependent child of a
397 resident of the state who was killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the
398 intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005,
399 and (9) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or
400 surviving spouse of a person who was killed in action while performing
401 active military duty with the armed forces of the United States on or
402 after September 11, 2001, and who was a resident of this state. If any
403 person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with the provisions
404 of this subsection also receives educational reimbursement from an
405 employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the amount of such
406 educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of the National
407 Guard described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall be given the
408 same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in registering for
409 courses at Connecticut state universities. Notwithstanding the
410 provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled in
411 this state" includes domicile for less than one year.

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

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

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

437 (f) Said board shall set aside from its anticipated tuition revenue, an
438 amount not less than that required by the board of governors' tuition
439 policy established under subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of section 10a-
440 6. Such funds shall be used to provide tuition waivers, tuition
441 remissions, grants for educational expenses and student employment
442 for any undergraduate or graduate student who is enrolled as a full or
443 part-time matriculated student in a degree-granting program, or
444 enrolled in a precollege remedial program, and who demonstrates

445 substantial financial need. Said board may also set aside from its
446 anticipated tuition revenue an additional amount equal to one per cent
447 of [said] such tuition revenue for financial assistance for students who
448 would not otherwise be eligible for financial assistance but who do have
449 a financial need as determined by the university in accordance with this
450 subsection. In determining such financial need, the university shall
451 exclude the value of equity in the principal residence of the student's
452 parents or legal guardians, or in the student's principal residence if the
453 student is not considered to be a dependent of his parents or legal
454 guardians and shall assess the earnings of a dependent student at the
455 rate of thirty per cent.

456 (g) The Connecticut State University System Operating Fund shall be
457 reimbursed for the amount by which the tuition and extension fee
458 waivers granted under subsection (d) of this section exceed two and
459 one-half per cent of tuition and extension fee revenue through an annual
460 state appropriation. The board of trustees shall request such an
461 appropriation and [said] such appropriation shall be based upon an
462 estimate of tuition and extension fee revenue loss using tuition and
463 extension fee rates in effect for the fiscal year in which such
464 appropriation will apply.

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

468 (e) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition fees for
469 any undergraduate or graduate degree program at The University of
470 Connecticut (1) for any dependent child of a person whom the armed
471 forces of the United States has declared to be missing in action or to have
472 been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed forces after January
473 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission to The University
474 of Connecticut and is a resident of the state at the time such child is
475 accepted for admission to said institution, (2) subject to the provisions
476 of subsection (f) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in section 27-
477 103, 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, 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

513 accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives
514 educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be
515 reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans
516 and members of the National Guard described in subdivision (4) of this
517 subsection shall be given the same status as students not receiving
518 tuition waivers in registering for courses at The University of
519 Connecticut. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used
520 in this subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less
521 than one year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

574 (NEW) (h) The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall waive
575 the payment of tuition fees at Charter Oak State College (1) subject to
576 the provisions of subsection (i) of this section, for any veteran, as defined
577 in section 27-103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in

578 section 27-103, except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in
579 time of war" shall not include time spent in attendance at a military
580 service academy, which veteran has been accepted for admission to
581 Charter Oak State College and is domiciled in this state at the time such
582 veteran is accepted for admission to said institution, and (2) for any
583 active member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A)
584 has been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's
585 designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled
586 or accepted for admission to Charter Oak State College on a full-time or
587 part-time basis in a degree-granting program. If any such veteran or
588 member of the National Guard who receives a tuition fee waiver in
589 accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives
590 educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be
591 reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans
592 and members of the National Guard described in this subsection shall
593 be given the same status as students not receiving tuition fee waivers in
594 registering for courses at Charter Oak State College. Notwithstanding
595 the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this subsection, "domiciled
596 in this state" includes domicile for less than one year.

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

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

611 of such federal educational assistance to be paid to Charter Oak State
612 College on behalf of such veteran by (ii) an amount obtained by dividing
613 (I) the actual tuition fees charged by Charter Oak State College to such
614 veteran by (II) the sum of the actual tuition fees and other fees charged
615 by Charter Oak State College to such veteran.

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

619 Sec. 14. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) Annually on the eleventh day
620 of November, any person who is a veteran, as defined in section 27-103
621 of the general statutes, shall be exempt from payment of the lawful
622 charge for state-owned or state-controlled bus public transportation
623 service, provided such person presents to the fare inspector, as defined
624 in section 13b-2 of the general statutes, or the driver of such bus, as
625 applicable, a motor vehicle operator's license or identity card indicating
626 such person's status as a veteran, as provided in subsection (e) of section
627 14-36h of the general statutes.

628 (b) Not later than January 1, 2026, the Commissioner of
629 Transportation shall (1) study the feasibility of annually exempting
630 veterans, by January 1, 2030, from payment of any charge, fee or fare
631 associated with riding all modes of public transportation in this state on
632 the eleventh day of November, and (2) if feasible, develop a plan to
633 implement such an exemption. Not later than February 1, 2026, the
634 commissioner shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section
635 11-4a of the general statutes, a report detailing the results of such study
636 and recommendations for legislation to carry out such plan to the joint
637 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
638 matters relating to transportation and veterans' affairs.

639 Sec. 15. Section 51-297 of the general statutes, as amended by section
640 201 of public act 23-204, is repealed and the following is substituted in
641 lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

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

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

654 (c) If a public defender, assistant public defender or deputy assistant
655 public defender is appointed to provide assistance to any person and he
656 subsequently determines that the person is ineligible for assistance, the
657 public defender, assistant public defender or deputy assistant public
658 defender shall promptly inform the person in writing and make a
659 motion to withdraw his appearance if filed, or his appointment if made
660 by the court, as soon as it is practical to do so without prejudice to the
661 case, giving the defendant a reasonable time to secure private counsel.
662 If the withdrawal is granted by the court, the person shall reimburse the
663 commission for any assistance which has been provided for which the
664 person is ineligible.

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

668 (e) The Chief Public Defender or anyone serving under him may
669 institute an investigation into the financial status of each defendant at
670 such times as the circumstances shall warrant. In connection therewith,
671 he shall have the authority to require a defendant or the parents,
672 guardians or other persons responsible for the support of a minor
673 defendant, child or youth, or those persons holding property in trust or

674 otherwise for a defendant, child or youth, to execute and deliver such
675 written authorizations as may be necessary to provide the Chief Public
676 Defender, or anyone serving under him, with access to records of public
677 or private sources, otherwise confidential, or any other information,
678 which may be relevant to the making of a decision as to eligibility under
679 this chapter. The Chief Public Defender, the Deputy Chief Public
680 Defender, and each public defender, assistant public defender and
681 deputy assistant public defender or designee, are authorized to obtain
682 information from any office of the state or any subdivision or agency
683 thereof on request and without payment of any fees.

684 (f) (1) As used in this chapter, "indigent defendant" means (A) a
685 person who is formally charged with the commission of a crime
686 punishable by imprisonment and who does not have the financial ability
687 at the time of his request for representation to secure competent legal
688 representation and to provide other necessary expenses of legal
689 representation; (B) a child who has a right to counsel under the
690 provisions of subsection (a) of section 46b-135 and who does not have
691 the financial ability at the time of his request for representation to secure
692 competent legal representation and to provide other necessary expenses
693 of legal representation; or (C) any person who has a right to counsel
694 under section 46b-136 and who does not have the financial ability at the
695 time of his request for representation to secure competent legal
696 representation and to provide other necessary expenses of legal
697 representation.

698 (2) An assessment determining whether a person has the financial
699 ability to secure competent legal representation and to provide other
700 necessary expenses of legal representation or qualifies as an indigent
701 defendant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be based
702 upon guidelines established by the commission. The commission shall
703 annually establish such guidelines providing that a person whose
704 income, which shall exclude all service-connected disability benefits
705 administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and
706 otherwise be calculated as described in such guidelines, is two hundred

707 fifty per cent or less of the federal poverty level may qualify as an
708 indigent defendant. The commission shall make such guidelines
709 available to the public on the Division of Public Defender Service's
710 Internet web site.

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

716 Sec. 16. Subsection (b) of section 27-102*l* of the general statutes is
717 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
718 *2025*):

719 (b) (1) The commissioner may appoint a manager to administer an
720 Office of Advocacy and Assistance for the aid and benefit of veterans
721 and their spouses, eligible dependents and family members. The office
722 shall have a staff of not less than [ten] nineteen men and women,
723 including [eight] not less than fourteen veterans' service officers, and
724 not less than three clerical personnel. The manager and veterans' service
725 officers shall be veterans, as defined in subsection (a) of section 27-103,
726 or veterans who were awarded the armed forces expeditionary medal
727 for service by the armed forces.

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

739 state.

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

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

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

770 (B) The manager and each veterans' service officer shall electronically

771 track information relating to outreach conducted or attended by the
772 office, including, but not limited to, the title or type of any outreach
773 event conducted or attended and the number of veterans or their
774 spouses, eligible dependents or family members to whom substantive
775 services or referrals were provided.

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

784 (D) The office shall provide quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees
785 for the Department of Veterans Affairs on (i) concerns raised by veterans
786 or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members, which
787 concerns shall be summarized by type, frequency and resolution, (ii)
788 petitions filed by veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or
789 family members received by the commissioner under section 27-102l(d)-
790 54 of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies for the four preceding
791 months, and (iii) copies of any such petitions.

792 Sec. 17. Section 32-7g of the general statutes is repealed and the
793 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

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

803 funded and that the default rate of small businesses that receive
804 assistance under said program be not more than twenty per cent.

805 (b) The Small Business Express program shall consist of various
806 components, including (1) a revolving loan fund, as described in
807 subsection (c) of this section, to support small business growth, (2) at
808 least one minority business revolving loan fund, as described in
809 subsection (d) of this section, to support the growth of minority-owned
810 businesses, (3) a component established in consultation with
811 representatives from Connecticut-based banks and a banking industry
812 association, as described in subsection (e) of this section, and (4) a
813 component established in consultation with Connecticut Innovations,
814 Incorporated, as described in subsection (f) of this section. The
815 commissioner may give preference to program applications from
816 disabled veteran-owned businesses. Notwithstanding the provisions of
817 section 32-5a regarding relocation limits, the department may require,
818 as a condition of receiving financial assistance pursuant to this section,
819 that a small business receiving such assistance shall not relocate, as
820 defined in section 32-5a, for five years after receiving such assistance or
821 during the term of the loan, whichever is longer. All other conditions
822 and penalties imposed pursuant to section 32-5a shall continue to apply
823 to such small business. As used in this subsection, (A) "disabled veteran"
824 means a veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who has a disability rating
825 of at least thirty per cent, as determined by the United States
826 Department of Veterans Affairs; and (B) "disabled veteran-owned
827 business" means a small business of which greater than fifty per cent is
828 owned by one or more disabled veterans.

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

832 (d) (1) There is established as part of the Small Business Express
833 program at least one revolving loan fund to provide loans to eligible
834 small businesses that are owned by one or more members of a minority.
835 As used in this subsection, (A) "minority business development entity"

836 means a nonprofit organization (i) having a lending portfolio on or
837 before June 9, 2016, from which at least seventy-five per cent of lending
838 is provided to minority-owned businesses state-wide; and (ii) that
839 provided technical assistance on or before June 9, 2016, provided at least
840 seventy-five per cent of such assistance was provided to minority-
841 owned businesses state-wide; and (B) "minority" means (i) Black
842 Americans, including all persons having origins in any of the Black
843 African racial groups not of Hispanic origin; (ii) Hispanic Americans,
844 including all persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South
845 American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race; (iii) all
846 persons having origins in the Iberian Peninsula, including Portugal,
847 regardless of race; (iv) women; (v) Asian Pacific Americans and Pacific
848 islanders; or (vi) American Indians and persons having origins in any of
849 the original peoples of North America and maintaining identifiable
850 tribal affiliations through membership and participation or community
851 identification.

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

868 (3) Loans from a minority business revolving loan fund may be in

869 amounts from ten thousand dollars to a maximum of five hundred
870 thousand dollars, shall carry a maximum repayment rate of four per
871 cent and shall be for a term of not more than ten years. The minority
872 business development entity shall review and approve loan terms,
873 conditions and collateral requirements in a manner that prioritizes job
874 growth and retention.

875 (4) Any eligible small business owned by one or more members of a
876 minority may apply for assistance from a minority business revolving
877 loan fund, provided the minority business development entity shall
878 give priority to applicants that, as part of their business plan, are
879 creating new jobs that will be maintained for not less than twelve
880 consecutive months.

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

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

896 (e) The commissioner, in consultation with representatives from
897 Connecticut-based banks and a banking industry association, may
898 establish as part of the Small Business Express program a component
899 operated in collaboration with Connecticut-based banks, which may
900 include, but need not be limited to, loan guarantees, short-term loans

901 used as a bridge to private sector financing and the transfer of loans
902 issued under subsection (c) of this section. Any loans issued under such
903 component shall be used for acquisition or purchase of machinery and
904 equipment, construction or leasehold improvements, relocation
905 expenses, working capital, which may be used for payment of rent, or
906 other business-related expenses, as authorized by the commissioner.
907 The provisions of subsections (c) and (d) of this section shall not be
908 construed to apply to such component. Such component shall be
909 administered by Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated, in
910 collaboration with the Department of Economic and Community
911 Development. For purposes of this section, "Connecticut-based banks"
912 means banks and out-of-state banks, each as defined in section 36a-2,
913 having deposit-taking branches in the state.

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

923 (g) Not later than February 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the
924 commissioner shall provide a report, in accordance with the provisions
925 of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committees of the General
926 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and
927 bonding, appropriations, commerce and labor. Such report shall include
928 available data on (1) the number of small businesses that received
929 assistance under the Small Business Express program and the general
930 categories of such businesses, (2) the amounts and types of assistance
931 provided, (3) the total number of jobs on the date of application and the
932 number proposed to be created or retained, (4) the most recent
933 employment figures of the small businesses receiving assistance, (5) the

934 default rate of small businesses that received assistance under said
935 program, and (6) the progress of the lenders participating in said
936 program in becoming self-sustainable. The contents of such report shall
937 also be included in the department's annual report.

938 (h) The commissioner may contract with nongovernmental entities,
939 including, but not limited to, nonprofit organizations, economic and
940 community development organizations, lending institutions, and
941 technical assistance providers to carry out the provisions of this section.

942 Sec. 18. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) Up to \$75,000 of the amount
943 appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs, for the fiscal year
944 ending June 30, 2026, shall be transferred to The University of
945 Connecticut for the purpose of The School of Public Policy at The
946 University of Connecticut, with the advice of the advisory committee
947 described in subsection (b) of this section, conducting the studies
948 described in subsection (c) of this section. The Commissioner of
949 Veterans Affairs and The University of Connecticut shall enter into a
950 memorandum of understanding to effectuate the provisions of this
951 subsection.

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

967 (c) (1) The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut,
968 in consultation with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and
969 Management, shall conduct a study of the projected impacts on state
970 and municipal finances of (A) raising the exemption amounts set forth
971 in subdivisions (19) to (26), inclusive, of section 12-81 of the general
972 statutes, and (B) imposing a limit on the amount of property belonging
973 to, or held in trust for, an individual described in any of said
974 subdivisions in order to be eligible for such an exemption. Such study
975 shall account for increases to such exemption amounts in accordance
976 with the provisions of section 12-62g of the general statutes and for
977 additional exemptions granted in accordance with the provisions of
978 section 12-81g of the general statutes. Not later than February 1, 2026,
979 The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut and the
980 Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management shall jointly submit,
981 in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,
982 a report detailing the results of such study and any recommendations
983 for legislation to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly
984 having cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and military affairs,
985 finance, revenue and bonding, appropriations and the budgets of state
986 agencies and planning and development.

987 (2) The School of Public Policy at The University of Connecticut, in
988 consultation with the manager of the Office of Advocacy and
989 Assistance, shall conduct a study of the efficacy of municipalities in
990 providing assistance to veterans under section 27-135 of the general
991 statutes. Such study shall identify strengths and limitations in the
992 provision of such assistance and develop solutions for implementation
993 to address areas needing improvement, broken down by each
994 municipality. Not later than February 1, 2026, The School of Public
995 Policy at The University of Connecticut and the manager of the Office
996 of Advocacy and Assistance shall jointly submit, in accordance with the
997 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, a report detailing the
998 results of such study and any recommendations for legislation to the
999 joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
1000 matters relating to veterans' and military affairs.

1001 Sec. 19. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section:

1002 (1) "Compensation" means payment of any money, thing of value or
1003 financial benefit; and

1004 (2) "Veterans benefits matter" means the preparation, presentation or
1005 prosecution of any claim affecting any individual who has filed or
1006 expressed an intent to file a claim for any benefit, program, service,
1007 commodity, function or status to which such individual may be entitled,
1008 as determined under the laws and regulations administered by the
1009 United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the Connecticut
1010 Department of Veterans Affairs relating to veterans, their dependents,
1011 their survivors and any other eligible recipients for any such benefit,
1012 program, service, commodity, function or status. As used in this
1013 subdivision, "preparation" includes, but is not limited to, consulting
1014 with or giving advice to a claimant or potential claimant in
1015 contemplation of filing any such claim, gathering evidence in support
1016 of such a claim or completing United States Department of Veterans
1017 Affairs forms for submission to the United States Department of
1018 Veterans Affairs.

1019 (b) The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the
1020 Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, the Attorney General
1021 and the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, shall study (1) the
1022 unauthorized, unregulated and potentially misleading and predatory
1023 practices in this state of unaccredited commercial entities or their agents
1024 related to advice or assistance with veterans benefits matters, including,
1025 but not limited to, such entities' or agents' compensation for such advice
1026 or assistance, and (2) the availability to veterans in this state of such
1027 advice and assistance, free of charge, from United States Department of
1028 Veterans Affairs-accredited veterans' service organizations, state and
1029 municipal veterans offices and other representatives that have been so
1030 accredited.

1031 (c) Not later than February 1, 2026, the Commissioner of Veterans
1032 Affairs shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a

1033 of the general statutes, a report detailing the findings of such study and
 1034 any recommendations for legislation to the Governor and to the joint
 1035 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
 1036 matters relating to veterans' and military affairs."

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025</i>	17b-28i(a)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025</i>	17b-104(a)
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025</i>	17b-191(c)
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025</i>	17b-256f
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025</i>	17b-261(a)
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025</i>	17b-342(l)
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2025, and applicable to applications filed on or after July 1, 2025</i>	17b-801(a)
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10a-26
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10a-77(d) to (g)
Sec. 11	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10a-99(d) to (g)
Sec. 12	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10a-105(e) to (h)

Sec. 13	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10a-143(h) and (i)
Sec. 14	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 15	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	51-297
Sec. 16	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	27-102l(b)
Sec. 17	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	32-7g
Sec. 18	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 19	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section