



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 358

February Session, 2026

Substitute Senate Bill No. 380

Senate, April 2, 2026

The Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement reported through SEN. SLAP of the 5th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO SUPPORT PROMISE PROGRAMS IN THE STATE.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,
2 "promise program" means a scholarship program that provides a
3 scholarship in conjunction with services and resources, including, but
4 not limited to, mentoring, peer support networks and internships, to
5 scholarship recipients to ensure the postsecondary academic success of
6 such recipients.

7 (b) (1) Not later than September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the
8 Office of Higher Education shall provide a grant to each promise
9 program in the state that was established during or prior to the previous
10 fiscal year. Such grant shall be in an amount equal to three thousand
11 dollars per student enrolled in such promise program.

12 (2) Not later than July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, each promise

13 program that receives a grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this
14 subsection shall report to the Office of Higher Education the rate of
15 graduation, postsecondary program enrollment and job placement
16 achieved by the students enrolled in such promise program during the
17 fiscal year in which such grant was received.

18 (c) The Office of Higher Education shall establish a program to
19 support the establishment of new promise programs throughout the
20 state, with a goal of establishing eight new promise programs not later
21 than January 1, 2031, prioritizing the establishment of promise
22 programs that serve students in alliance districts, as defined in section
23 10-262u of the general statutes. The office shall coordinate with
24 municipalities and regional coalitions interested in establishing new
25 promise programs. The office shall support each new promise program
26 through the provision of (1) funding, in an amount designated by the
27 commissioner of said office, for the start-up expenses of such promise
28 program, and (2) technical assistance to start such promise program,
29 including, but not limited to, (A) initial funding strategies, (B)
30 stakeholder engagement, including, but not limited to, with each local
31 or regional board of education, legislative body and local nonprofit
32 organization and business of the municipality or region in which such
33 new promise program is located, (C) program design based on the local
34 environment, (D) development of evaluation metrics, and (E)
35 sustainability planning. The office shall hire a consultant with expertise
36 in the development and operation of promise programs to implement
37 the provisions of this subsection.

38 (d) Not later than January 1, 2027, and annually thereafter until
39 January 1, 2031, or until the establishment of eight new promise
40 programs, whichever is earlier, the Office of Higher Education shall
41 submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general
42 statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
43 having cognizance of matters relating to higher education and
44 employment advancement a progress report from the consultant hired
45 pursuant to subsection (c) of this section on the establishment of new
46 promise programs in the state.

47 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section:

48 (1) "Net cost of attendance" means the rate of tuition and required
49 fees that are established by an institution of higher education for the
50 academic year commencing with the fall semester of 2026, minus an
51 average amount of financial aid received by a student in such student's
52 income bracket;

53 (2) "Financial aid" means the sum of all scholarships, grants and
54 federal, state and institutional aid received each academic year by a
55 qualifying student. "Financial aid" does not include any federal, state or
56 private student loans received by a qualifying student;

57 (3) "Qualifying student" means any person who (A) is a resident of
58 the state, (B) attended from grades nine to twelve, inclusive, and
59 graduated from a public or nonpublic high school in the state, with a
60 cumulative attendance rate of not less than ninety per cent, (C) enrolls,
61 not more than one year after graduating from such high school, as a full-
62 time student for the academic year commencing with the fall semester
63 of 2026, or any academic year thereafter, at an institution of higher
64 education in a program leading to a bachelor's degree, (D) is making
65 satisfactory academic progress while enrolled at such institution, (E)
66 maintains good academic standing, as determined by such institution,
67 while enrolled at such institution, (F) has completed the Free
68 Application for Federal Student Aid, and (G) has accepted all available
69 financial aid;

70 (4) "Institution of higher education" means each (A) constituent unit,
71 as defined in section 10a-1 of the general statutes, of the state system of
72 higher education, and (B) nonprofit institution established in the state
73 (i) that has degree-granting authority in the state; (ii) that has its main
74 campus located in the state; (iii) that is not included in the state system
75 of public higher education; and (iv) whose primary function is not the
76 preparation of students for religious vocation;

77 (5) "Full-time student" means a student who is enrolled at an
78 institution of higher education and is carrying twelve or more credit

79 hours in a semester; and

80 (6) "First-year experience program" means a program of support to
81 assist a student in the student's transition from high school to higher
82 education through the provision of specialized academic support, peer
83 mentorship, orientation and connection to campus resources
84 throughout the student's first academic year at an institution of higher
85 education.

86 (b) The Office of Higher Education shall establish a grant program
87 known as the Scholar Success Grant Program. For the academic year
88 commencing with the fall semester of 2026, and each academic year
89 thereafter, the office shall award a Scholar Success Grant to each
90 qualifying student at the following percentage of the net cost of
91 attendance at (1) a public institution of higher education in the state: (A)
92 Forty per cent for a qualifying student with a household income of thirty
93 thousand dollars or less, (B) thirty-six per cent for a qualifying student
94 with a household income greater than thirty thousand dollars, but not
95 more than forty-eight thousand dollars, (C) thirty-two per cent for a
96 qualifying student with a household income greater than forty-eight
97 thousand dollars, but not more than seventy-five thousand dollars, (D)
98 twenty-eight per cent for a qualifying student with a household income
99 greater than seventy-five thousand dollars, but not more than one
100 hundred ten thousand dollars, and (E) twenty-four per cent for a
101 qualifying student with a household income greater than one hundred
102 ten thousand dollars, or (2) an independent institution of higher
103 education, as defined in section 10a-173 of the general statutes: (A)
104 Twenty per cent for a qualifying student with a household income of
105 thirty thousand dollars or less, (B) sixteen per cent for a qualifying
106 student with a household income greater than thirty thousand dollars,
107 but not more than forty-eight thousand dollars, (C) twelve per cent for
108 a qualifying student with a household income greater than forty-eight
109 thousand dollars, but not more than seventy-five thousand dollars, (D)
110 eight per cent for a qualifying student with a household income greater
111 than seventy-five thousand dollars, but not more than one hundred ten
112 thousand dollars, and (E) eight per cent for a qualifying student with a

113 household income greater than one hundred ten thousand dollars. Such
114 grant shall be available to such qualifying student for not more than six
115 consecutive academic years or until such qualifying student graduates,
116 whichever occurs sooner. The office shall provide each Scholar Success
117 Grant directly to the institution of higher education in which such
118 student enrolls, provided such institution complies with the
119 requirements set forth in subsection (c) of this section.

120 (c) To receive a Scholar Success Grant from the Office of Higher
121 Education for any qualifying student who enrolls at an institution of
122 higher education, such institution shall: (1) Enroll each qualifying
123 student in a first-year experience program at such institution, (2) enroll
124 each qualifying student in a financial literacy program during the spring
125 or summer prior to such qualifying student's first academic year at such
126 institution, (3) provide to each qualifying student a transparent
127 multiyear financial aid award letter in an easily understood format that
128 includes, but is not limited to, the net cost of attendance, designation of
129 any one-time awards or costs and an explanation of student loan
130 expectations, and (4) assign to each qualifying student an advisor who
131 shall advise such qualifying student when making financial, academic
132 or career decisions from the time such qualifying student accepts
133 admission to such institution until such qualifying student graduates.

134 (d) Not later than January 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the Office
135 of Higher Education shall submit a report, in accordance with the
136 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing
137 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
138 relating to higher education and employment advancement. Such report
139 shall include, but need not be limited to, the (1) number of qualifying
140 students receiving Scholar Success Grants during the current academic
141 year, (2) household income brackets of such students, and (3) amount of
142 such grants received by each institution of higher education for the
143 academic year during which the office submits such report.

144 Sec. 3. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) The sum of four million eight hundred
145 thousand dollars is appropriated to the Office of Higher Education,

146 from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, for
147 grants to promise programs pursuant to section 1 of this act.

148 Sec. 4. (Effective July 1, 2026) The sum of thirty million dollars is
149 appropriated to the Office of Higher Education, from the General Fund,
150 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, for the Scholar Success Grant
151 Program established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 2	July 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 3	July 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 4	July 1, 2026	New section

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 1(c)(1), "executive director" was changed to "commissioner" for accuracy; in Section 1(c)(2)(B), "with" was inserted before "each local" and "of the municipality or region in which such new promise program is located" was inserted after "business" for clarity; and in Section 2(d), "2026" was changed to "2027" for accuracy.

HED Joint Favorable Subst.

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Higher Ed., Off.	GF - Cost	At least 38.7 million	At least 69.3 million
Constituent Units of Higher Education	OF - Potential Revenue Gain	See Below	See Below
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	155,340	155,340

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill results in costs to the Office of Higher Education of at least \$38.7 million in FY 27 and at least \$69.3 million in FY 28, with higher costs in the out years. The bill requires the Office of Higher Education to: (1) establish a Scholar Success Grant Program to support qualifying Connecticut high school graduates with the cost of higher education; (2) provide a grant to existing Promise programs² in the state; and (3) establish eight new Promise programs throughout the state. Below is a further discussion of the cost of the three new initiatives.

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 41.82% of payroll in FY 27.

² Promise programs provide financial, academic, and other support to undergraduate college students, and high school students who wish to attend college, who meet certain criteria. The programs can be funded via public or private funding and typically serve students from low-income areas. There are currently four Promise programs in Connecticut in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury.

Scholar Success Grant Program

The bill results in a cost of at least \$31.1 million in FY 27 and at least \$62.2 million in FY 28 to establish the Scholar Success Grant Program in Section 2. The cost annualizes to at least \$124.5 million³ beginning in FY 30. Costs rise from FY 27 to FY 30 due to the program's phase-in as it adds its first four cohorts.

The program is intended to cover, for Connecticut high school graduates anywhere in the state who meet certain requirements, a portion of the net cost of attendance (cost after all grant and scholarship aid) at public and private institutions of higher education in the state. The portion covered by the bill varies based on income and type of institution (i.e., public or private), with the highest portion (40%) covered for low-income students at public institutions.

Costs will likely be higher than reported above based on changes in the net cost of attendance at public and private institutions, and on program demand.

The bill appropriates \$30 million in FY 27 for the Scholar Success Grant Program.

New and Existing Promise Programs

The bill results in a cost of at least \$7.7 million in FY 27 and at least \$7.2 million in FY 28 and annually thereafter related to new and existing Promise programs. It requires OHE to: (1) establish a grant of \$3,000 per student for existing Promise programs annually beginning in FY 27; (2) support the creation of eight new Promise programs in the state by January 1, 2031 as required by Section 1.

There is a cost of at least \$6.7 million annually beginning in FY 27 to provide a grant of \$3,000 per student for existing Promise programs.

³This analysis was conducted with information provided by the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges and with data obtained from the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The IPEDS data is from the 2022-23 academic year.

Currently, there are 2,232 students participating in the Hartford and Waterbury Promise programs alone. It is not known how many students participate in the Bridgeport or New Haven programs.

There is a one-time consultant cost of approximately \$500,000 in FY 27. The bill requires OHE to hire a consultant to support the creation of the eight new Promise programs in Section 1.

Additionally, it is anticipated that OHE will need to hire four staff, resulting in costs of \$526,700 annually beginning in FY 27. These costs assume OHE would need to hire one fiscal/administrative supervisor (salary of \$100,500) and three associate fiscal/administrative officers (salary of \$90,300 each), resulting in total salary costs of \$371,400 and fringe benefit costs of \$155,300. It is expected that these staff would be needed to support all three of the bill's initiatives.

The bill also requires OHE to provide funding for the start-up expenses of the new Promise programs. This results in a cost dependent on the level of support determined by the OHE commissioner, with the timing dependent on when the new programs begin.

The bill appropriates \$4.8 million in FY 27 for grants to new and existing Promise programs.

Revenue Impact on Constituent Units of Higher Education

The bill results in a potential revenue gain annually beginning in FY 27 to UConn and the Connecticut State Universities (CSUs). To the extent that the bill increases enrollment at those institutions, UConn and the CSUs would incur an increase in tuition and fee revenue (and potentially room and board revenue) that would vary based on the number of people who choose to attend, and the tuition and fees charged by the institutions.

The Out Years

The bill's total estimated costs in the out years are at least \$100.6 million in FY 29 and at least \$131.7 million annually thereafter.

Of this total, the estimated cost of the Scholars Success Grant Program is \$83.3 million in FY 29 and \$124.5 million annually thereafter. The annualized ongoing fiscal impact of the Scholars Success Grant Program would continue beyond FY 30 subject to changes in the net cost of attendance at public and private higher education institutions, and demand for the Scholar Success Grant Program.

OLR Bill Analysis**sSB 380*****AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO SUPPORT PROMISE PROGRAMS IN THE STATE.*****SUMMARY**

This bill requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE) to (1) give annual grants to each promise program in the state that was established during or prior to the previous fiscal year, beginning by September 1, 2026, and (2) create a program to support establishing new promise programs, which must prioritize alliance districts, with a goal of establishing eight new promise programs in the state by January 1, 2031. Under the bill, “promise programs” are scholarship programs that give recipients postsecondary scholarships and associated services, such as mentoring, peer support, and internships.

Additionally, the bill requires OHE to establish the Scholar Success Grant program beginning for the Fall 2026 semester. The program must award postsecondary scholarship grants to qualifying students in an amount that covers a percentage of the net cost of attendance at in-state higher education institutions. Under the bill, the grant amount a student receives depends on (1) the student’s household income bracket and (2) whether the institution is public or independent.

The bill also appropriates to OHE \$4,800,000 for promise program grants and \$30,000,000 for the Scholar Success Grant program from the General Fund for FY 27.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

PROMISE PROGRAMS

The bill requires OHE to (1) give grants to existing promise programs and (2) create a program to support the establishment of new promise

programs.

Existing Promise Programs Grants

The bill requires OHE to give annual grants equal to \$3,000 per enrolled student to each promise program in the state that was established during or prior to the previous fiscal year, beginning by September 1, 2026.

Additionally, beginning by July 1, 2027, each promise program that receives a grant must report annually to OHE on scholarship recipient outcomes, including information on graduation rates, postsecondary program enrollment, and job placements.

OHE Program to Create New Promise Programs

The bill requires OHE to establish a program to support the creation of new promise programs throughout the state. The program must prioritize programs serving students in alliance districts (see BACKGROUND) and maintain a goal of establishing eight new promise programs by January 1, 2031.

Through the program, OHE must:

1. coordinate with municipalities and regional coalitions;
2. support each new promise program with funding for start-up expenses (in an amount designated by the commissioner);
3. provide each new promise program with start-up technical assistance, including on strategies related to funding, stakeholder engagement, program design, evaluation, and sustainability;
4. hire a consultant with expertise in developing and operating promise programs; and
5. annually submit to the General Assembly a progress report from the consultant until January 1, 2031, or until eight new promise programs are established, whichever is first.

SCHOLAR SUCCESS GRANT

The bill requires OHE to establish the Scholar Success Grant program beginning with the Fall 2026 semester. Under the program, OHE must award grants in an amount that covers a percentage of the net cost of attendance, with the amount depending on (1) the student's household income bracket and (2) whether the institution is public or independent. Under the bill, the "net cost of attendance" equals the rate of tuition and fees established by the higher education institution for the 2026-2027 academic year minus an average amount of financial aid received by a student in that student's income bracket.

Under the bill, OHE must issue each Scholar Success Grant directly to the higher education institution where the qualifying student is enrolled.

Additionally, OHE must annually report on the program to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee beginning by January 1, 2026. The report must include the (1) number of students that received grants, (2) recipients' household income brackets, and (3) amount of grants received by each higher education institution.

Student Eligibility Qualifications

To qualify for a grant under the program, a student must:

1. be a Connecticut resident,
2. have attended a public or private high school in the state for all four years and graduated from it with a cumulative attendance rate of at least 90%,
3. enroll full-time at a higher education institution in a bachelor degree program not more than one year after graduating high school, and
4. make satisfactory academic progress and maintain good academic standing while enrolled at the institution.

Additionally, qualifying students must have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and have accepted all available financial aid, including scholarships, grants, and federal, state, and institutional aid (“financial aid” does not include federal, state, or private student loans).

Under the bill, qualifying students can receive grants (1) for up to six consecutive years or (2) until they graduate, whichever comes first.

Requirements for Higher Education Institutions

Under the bill, higher education institutions that enroll students who receive a grant under this program must provide these students with:

1. a first-year experience program that supports the student’s transition from high school to higher education through specialized academic support, peer mentorship, orientation, and connection to campus resources;
2. a financial literacy program during the spring or summer before the student enrolls;
3. a transparent, easily understandable multi-year financial aid award letter; and
4. an advisor to help make financial, academic, and career decisions.

Award Amounts

The following tables shows the percentage of the net cost of attendance covered under the grant based on the qualifying student’s household income if the student attends a public (Table 1) or independent (Table 2) higher education institution.

Table : Scholar Success Grant Amounts for Public Higher Education Institutions

<i>Household Income of Qualifying Student</i>	<i>Percentage of the Net Cost of Attendance Covered Under the Grant</i>
\$30,000 or less	40%
Above \$30,000 and up to \$48,000	36%
Above \$48,000 and up to \$75,000	32%
Above \$75,000 and up to \$110,000	28%
Above \$110,000	24%

Table : Scholar Success Grant Amounts for Independent Higher Education Institutions

<i>Household Income of Qualifying Student</i>	<i>Percentage of the Net Cost of Attendance Covered Under the Grant</i>
\$30,000 or less	20%
Above \$30,000 and up to \$48,000	16%
Above \$48,000 and up to \$75,000	12%
Above \$75,000	8%

BACKGROUND

Alliance Districts

By law, the education commissioner has designated 36 alliance districts for five years, beginning with FY 23. The current designation applies to (1) the 33 school districts with the lowest accountability index scores and (2) three previously designated districts that were no longer among the 33 with the lowest scores. The index is based on several student-centered measures, including statewide assessment results and high school graduation rates, among others.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 0