

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5478 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT SUPPORTING "LEARN AND EARN" INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Gregory Haddad, 54th Dist.

Rep. Corey P. Paris, 145th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to increase access for "Learn and Earn" internships to more students in this state. Students are statistically less likely to enter higher education in recent years due to many causes, but, according to the proponents of this bill, by providing a new means by which a student can engage in paid internships can reduce college debt and encourage students to enter higher education and stay to work in our state as local industry, having provided these internship opportunities, would benefit from a stronger workforce pipeline.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The Substitute Language for HB-5478 clarifies the status of salaries paid to interns that meet the quality seal criteria for internships are so clarified by subsection b of section 4 of this act.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, Interim Chancellor, O. John Maduko](#): Interim Chancellor Maduko offers his opposition to many parts of this bill, "[R]egarding state appropriations, implementation, and operational structure that we believe are important to address to ensure the program can be successfully administered." These issues include whether the General Assembly will appropriate funds to these projects, and if they will be recurring. Secondly, they wish to know if the funds would only be for students or also assist in addressing administrative costs for implementation and operation of the program.

Maduko also claims that the implementation of the bill administratively is a major task and without dedicated resources, it would be difficult to do as imagined by the bill.

They also wish for clarification regarding implementation on CSCU campuses by CSCU itself or outsourced to an outside organization. Since the bill taps the Chief Workforce officer with creating a "quality seal" for these internships, CSCU wishes to know how far they are to be invested in this program to create clarity and uniformity on action taken with employers and institutions.

[Office of Workforce Strategy, Chief Workforce Officer, Kelli-Marie Vallieres](#): Vallieres expresses general support for the legislation as they have initiated development of a Work-Based Learning Toolkit for Employers which is intended to, "[H]elp businesses develop rigorous internships that meet the needs of students and employers, as well as releasing a small grant award to Career ConneCT Grantees for wage subsidies to entice employer participation in Work-Based Learning activities."

Yet, as Section 4 of this bill requires the Office of Workforce Strategy to create a "quality seal" on these internship programs would make necessary more resources for review and implementation which is not a part of the Governor's Budget.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Sasco River Center, Executive Director, Christopher Bogart](#): Supports this legislation claiming that, as a Clinical Psychologist and operator of a child behavioral health center, it is theorized that this bill can support youth which need such internships in pursuit of higher education.

[Connecticut Business & Industry Association, Policy Director, Danielle Cloud](#): Supports this legislation claiming that it gives opportunities to smaller employers to have internships through state funding. Though they question section 5's tax credits, desiring to know if not only corporations can benefit from the Human Capital Investment Tax Credit, or can smaller entities like LLC's, S-corporations, or partnerships join? They recommend changes including, clarifying which entities qualify for the program, allowing credit to flow to the owners for tax purposes, apply credit against personal income tax liability, and allowing monetization of unused credits.

[The Alliance, Public Policy and Advocacy Associate, Emmeline Franklin](#): Supports this legislation, especially section 7, which would, according to Franklin, allow grants to be given to non-profits to offset costs of employing interns. They claim that it would recognize the work done by non-profits in the internship arena and support those who benefit from them, specifically low-income students who cannot afford to take unpaid internships during their college career. In effect, this would result in a strengthened workforce with more paid interns in a pipeline to a job in the state post-graduation.

[University of Connecticut, Vice President, James Lowe](#): Supports this legislation given research which points to only 11% of employers thinking graduates have enough knowledge to work, and 43% of students being unable to get an internship. Mixed with programs, such as Work+, UConn is already offering for internships and other aid methods, this program would lower costs to the university as well with the extension of tax credits.

Yet they claim that in section 1(b), UConn does not have enough money to comply with a statewide program to train small businesses in internship management, yet they are willing to

collaborate with the Committee and the Chief Workforce Officer to see how this can work in the future.

[The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, President & CEO, Jason Patlis](#): Supports this legislation claiming that section 7 would allow non-profits such as themselves offer more internships to students to get hands-on experience in their field, reinforcing the state workforce pipeline and increasing career-focused and relevant experience in internships for students partaking in them.

[MDRC, Senior Research Analyst, Kelsey Schaberg](#): Schaberg expresses support for this legislation providing statistics regarding workforce and earning improvements seen with paid internship and work experience programs. She claims, "Paid programs, including internships, can help students who face financial barriers be able to participate. Small stipends, however, are often not enough if they do not cover all a students' living expenses or offset lost wages they may have from reduced work." In effect, Schaberg recommends flexible/hybrid designed programs be implemented to increase employer partnerships under strict monitoring to gain the best outcomes in reducing financial barriers to student success.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Anonymous, Anonymous](#): Opposes this legislation claiming that it creates multiple grant programs that are limited in oversight.

[Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, President, Jennifer Widness](#): Opposes this bill claiming that as written would apply only to public institutions while mandating tracking and reporting of aid assistance would be mandated to all institutions of higher education in the state, "[I]ncluding independent nonprofit colleges that may not be participating in or receiving support from these programs." These organizations vary on their level of engagement with internships and therefore would be more of an obligation for them to administer without connection to these programs. They recommend the Committee define reporting provisions and who they apply to concerning only those who benefit from support of the program envisioned in this bill.

Reported by: Tom Atwood

Date: 3/25/2026