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## OLR Bill Analysis

### sHB 5291

#### **AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING VARIOUS STATUTES RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY.**

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**§ 1 — MUNICIPAL FIRE CHIEF APPOINTMENTS**

*Requires municipal fire departments to notify DESPP about their appointments of a new or interim fire chief within 10 business days after the appointment*

The bill requires municipal fire departments to notify the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) when they appoint a new or interim fire chief, within 10 business days after the appointment. Notifications must be made on a form the DESPP commissioner sets and include the name of the appointee, appointment's effective date, department name, mailing and email address, mobile telephone number, dispatch contact number, and any other information the commissioner deems necessary for the department's records. The bill also allows him to adopt regulations to implement these provisions.

Under the bill, "municipal fire departments" are departments, agencies, and organizations of a municipality, fire district, or other Connecticut political subdivision that provide fire suppression or fire protection services and are staffed by career or volunteer personnel or both.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§§ 2 & 3 — BLOOD AND URINE TEST RESULTS TIMING**

*Limits, to chemical breath tests, which DUI-related test results must be sent to defendants within a specified timeframe*

The bill eliminates a requirement in current law that blood or urine test results be delivered to defendants within a certain timeframe for the tests to be admitted as evidence in court for driving under the influence (DUI), impaired boating, or impaired hunting criminal prosecutions.

Existing law establishes several conditions that generally must be met in order to admit into evidence breath, blood, or urine tests indicating the amount of alcohol or drugs in a defendant's system. Under current law, one condition is that a true copy of the test result report was mailed or personally delivered to the defendant within 24 hours or by the end of the next regular business day after the result was known, whichever is later. The bill limits this condition so that it only applies to chemical tests of the defendant's breath.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§§ 4 & 5 — DNA TESTING**

*Requires certain convicted felons and others to submit to DNA testing within six months after sentencing or entering into specific supervision or custody; requires the DESPP commissioner to conduct a study on the DNA obtained*

Existing law generally requires the collection of DNA from offenders convicted of felonies, criminal offenses against minors, non-violent sexual crimes, or sexually violent crimes. For these offenders who have (1) been sentenced to the custody of the Department of Correction (DOC) and (2) not had a blood or other biological sample taken after they were arrested, current law requires they provide a sample of sufficient quality for DNA analysis before being released from custody. The bill instead requires that this sampling be done within six months after sentencing.

The bill imposes similar six-month requirements for samples taken from offenders convicted of these crimes who (1) were not sentenced to confinement or (2) are serving a period of probation or parole. Specifically, it requires samplings be done within six months after sentencing or entering supervision, respectively. Current law only

requires that samplings be done as a condition of sentencing or prior to discharge, respectively.

For anyone convicted, or found not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect, of these crimes (or crimes that are substantially the same) in another state or jurisdiction, current law requires they submit to DNA testing before being discharged from DOC custody, Judicial Department or Board of Pardons and Paroles supervision, or the Psychiatric Security Review Board's jurisdiction, as applicable. The bill instead requires samples to be taken within six months after being placed with those entities.

Relatedly, the bill requires the DESPP commissioner to conduct a study of "lawfully owed DNA," which the bill defines as a DNA sample obtained under the above collection-mandate law. The study must include:

1. an audit of current DNA collection and submission practices across local and state law enforcement agencies, the Division of Criminal Justice, DOC, the Department of Developmental Services, and the Judicial Branch;
2. a census of individuals from whom DNA is lawfully owed but not collected and an analysis of systemic barriers to collection, timelines, interagency coordination, and data sharing;
3. a definition of agency responsibilities at each stage of the criminal justice process;
4. standard timelines and procedures for collecting and submitting DNA;
5. recommendations for data tracking and reporting protocols to ensure and facilitate transparency and compliance; and
6. any information the commissioner deems relevant.

By July 1, 2027, the commissioner must report on the study's findings and any recommendations to the Judiciary and Public Safety and

Security committees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the provisions requiring DNA samples be taken within six months is effective October 1, 2026.

**§ 6 — POLICE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

*Replaces, on the Police Officer Standards and Training Council, the State Police Academy commanding officer with the State Police deputy commissioner*

The bill changes the composition of the 23-member Police Officer Standards and Training Council by replacing the State Police Academy commanding officer with the State Police deputy commissioner or the deputy commissioner's designee.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§ 7 — NUMBER OF STATE POLICE**

*Eliminates the requirement that the DESPP commissioner appoint and maintain a number of sworn State Police personnel according to the recommended standards developed by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee in 2013*

Under existing law and according to the DESPP commissioner's determination, he must appoint and maintain enough sworn State Police personnel to efficiently maintain the operation of their division. The bill removes the requirement that he make his determination according to recommended standards the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) developed in a 2013 study. It relatedly deletes the study's requirement and obsolete language.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

***PRI Staffing Standards for DESPP to Apply***

PRI recommended the following standards for the DESPP commissioner to use in appointing and maintaining a sufficient number of sworn state police:

1. officers respond to 9-1-1 calls within 15 minutes at least 50% of the time;
2. functions explicitly stated in statute are provided;

3. State Police fully meet contractual obligations to towns to provide resident state troopers;
4. there is an adequate number of troopers to staff the 230 patrols, taking into consideration the shift relief factor;
5. patrol and resident state trooper supervision is sufficient based on a 1:8 span of control;
6. the two-officer minimum requirement for domestic violence, fatal accident, and untimely death or homicide calls for service is met at least 90% of the time; and
7. the use of regular duty overtime has not shown a sustained increase three years in a row.

## **§ 8 — SCHOOL SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM**

*Transfers authority over bond proceeds for the school security infrastructure competitive grant program from SDE to DESPP*

By law, DESPP, the Department of Administrative Services, and the State Department of Education (SDE) collectively administer the School Security Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program. The program reimburses approved applicants, within certain limits, for developing or improving security infrastructure, related training, or portable entrance security devices. Grants can be given to various entities, such as towns (for their public schools), private schools, and certain licensed childcare centers.

Existing law authorizes \$107 million in bond funding for the program. Current law requires SDE to use the bond proceeds for the program. The bill instead requires DESPP to do so, in consultation with SDE.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§§ 9 & 10 — FIREWORKS AND SPECIAL EFFECTS CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCY**

*Conditions certificates of competency to handle or fire certain fireworks and special effects displays on applicants submitting to state and national criminal history record checks and*

*providing evidence of good moral character and competence in the control and handling of the respective devices*

Existing law authorizes the DESPP commissioner to issue permits for certain fireworks and special effects displays. It also prohibits anyone from handling, discharging, or firing these displays unless it is done under the supervision of someone who has a certificate of competency from the commissioner.

The bill requires that these certificates only be granted after an applicant has submitted (1) to state and national criminal history record checks and (2) evidence of good moral character and competence controlling and handling fireworks (or special effects).

Additionally, the bill (1) specifies that fireworks certificates of competency are not transferable, (2) eliminates the authority of local fire marshals to suspend or revoke a fireworks permit, and (3) makes technical and conforming changes.

State regulations, unchanged by the bill, set several requirements for certificate applicants, including:

1. providing evidence of at least three years of employment on a professional fireworks or special effects crew with responsibility for at least 10 supervised displays;
2. producing a letter from the chief of police of the municipality in which the applicant resides attesting to the applicant's good character and suitability to handle fireworks or special effects; and
3. receiving a passing grade on a written examination administered by the state fire marshal (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 29-357-6b).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§ 11 — DESTRUCTION OF RISK PROTECTION ORDER ITEMS**

*Generally allows firearms, deadly weapons, and ammunition held under a risk protection order to be destroyed after two years instead of one year and requires the DESPP commissioner or local police department to notify the owner in writing at least 90 days before they are destroyed*

Existing law allows any police officer or state's attorney or assistant state's attorney, under limited circumstances, to apply to court for a warrant ("risk warrant") to seize firearms, deadly weapons, and ammunition from someone who poses an imminent risk of injuring himself or herself or someone else (CGS § 29-38c(a)). Under existing law, the court in the geographical area where the person lives must hold a hearing within 14 days after a risk warrant's issuance to determine if the state should continue to hold the seized items or return them.

If DESPP or a local police department is holding the seized items under a risk warrant, current law prohibits them from destroying the items until at least one year has passed since the warrant's termination date. The bill changes this provision by prohibiting the destruction until at least two years have passed since the date of the above hearing. It additionally requires, at least 90 days before destroying the items, DESPP and local police departments to notify the owner in writing of the date his or her items will be destroyed.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§ 12 — SECURITY OFFICER TRAINING WAIVERS**

*Requires the DESPP commissioner to waive security officer training requirements for certain correction, parole, and police officers, and judicial marshals who present proof of completing equivalent training*

Existing law requires, among other things, security officer license applicants to have successfully completed, within the two previous years, at least eight hours of training in basic first aid, search and seizure laws and regulations, use of force, basic criminal justice, and public safety issues. If they intend to carry a "less lethal weapon" (baton or pepper spray) while on duty, they must receive and complete additional DESPP-approved training. The bill specifies that the required search and seizure training is on state laws and regulations.

Under existing law, active military members and veterans, within two years after a discharge, are exempt from these training requirements if they received equivalent training while serving and

apply within two years of their discharge. The bill further exempts the following people if they present proof that they completed training that is equivalent to the training required for the license:

1. anyone currently employed, or separated from service in good standing within the past two years, as a DOC correction officer or parole officer, or Judicial Branch judicial marshal; and
2. anyone who is separated from service in good standing within the past two years as a police officer and is not prohibited from being hired by a law enforcement unit (due to serious misconduct, for example).

Relatedly, the bill requires incomplete license applications to be completed within 10 calendar days if the DESPP commissioner notifies the applicant (or security service employing the applicant who submitted the application) that an application is incomplete. For re-submissions, if the commissioner determines the application is still incomplete, he may, in his discretion, deny the application.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### **§ 13 — ELECTRONIC DEFENSE WEAPON TRAINING**

*Prohibits professional bondsmen, surety bail bond agents, and bail enforcement agents from carrying an electronic defense weapon unless they obtain a special permit*

Existing law prohibits professional bondsmen, surety bail bond agents, and bail enforcement agents from carrying a pistol, revolver, or other firearm while working unless they obtain a special permit from the DESPP commissioner. The bill extends this prohibition to them carrying electronic defense weapons. It allows the commissioner to grant them a special permit to carry those weapons if they prove to the commissioner's satisfaction that they have successfully completed a commissioner-approved course on safely using an electronic defense weapon. As is the case for permits with the other weapons, the bill requires permit holders to successfully complete an annual electronic defense weapons safety refresher course in order to renew their permits.

The bill makes technical and conforming changes, including extending to electronic defense weapons (1) other existing provisions on permit expiration notices and timing and (2) the commissioner's authority to adopt safety course regulations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

#### **§ 14 — CIVIL AIR PATROL YOUTH CAMP**

*Authorizes a Civil Air Patrol youth camp*

The bill allows the Connecticut Wing of the Civil Air Patrol to open, operate, and maintain a youth camp without an Office of Early Childhood (OEC) license. However, to be exempt, the camp must (1) be opened, operated, and maintained on state-owned or -leased property and use a facility operated exclusively by the Connecticut Military Department or U.S. Armed Forces, and (2) comply with the guidelines set forth in the "CAPP 79-10 Cadet Medication Management" Civil Air Patrol pamphlet during any overnight youth camp.

Generally, the current, April 2025 version of the pamphlet outlines tasks to be done by commanders, project officers, and event health service officers before, during, and after an overnight activity, such as (1) receiving, appropriately labeling, and securely storing all received medications; (2) supervising cadets as they self-administer their medications and maintaining a log of all self-administered medications; and (3) contacting parents or guardians in cases when the cadet does not show up at the appropriate time for medication self-administration, or when there are lost, damaged, contaminated, or refused medications. Among other things, it requires that state laws be followed, regardless of the guidelines in the pamphlet.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

#### ***Background — Civil Air Patrol***

The Civil Air Patrol is a congressionally chartered, federally funded nonprofit corporation and serves as the volunteer civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force (see 36 U.S.C. § 40301, et seq.).

**Background — Youth Camps**

By law, among other criteria, a “youth camp” is any regularly scheduled program or organized group activity advertised as a camp or operated only during school vacations or on weekends by a person, entity, or state or municipal agency for recreational or educational purposes that accommodates at least five children from ages 3 through 15 (CGS § 19a-420).

For youth camps to operate in the state, they generally must complete a comprehensive licensing process OEC runs, including background checks for employees who provide care or have unsupervised access to a child. There is generally a license fee of \$315 or \$815 depending on the entity.

**Background — Related Bill**

SB 372 (File 280), favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, has identical provisions.

**§ 15 — DASHBOARD CAMERAS AND POLICE PATROL VEHICLES**

*Specifies, for the purposes of the law requiring police patrol vehicles to use dashboard cameras, what a police patrol vehicle is not*

Under existing law, each state and local law enforcement unit must require the use of dashboard cameras with a remote recorder in each police patrol vehicle used by any of the police officers it employs (CGS § 29-6d(c)). The bill specifies that a “police patrol vehicle” does not include (1) administrative vehicles with a body camera-wearing occupant, (2) bicycles, (3) motor scooters, (4) all-terrain vehicles, (5) electric personal assistive mobility devices, and (6) animal control vehicles. In effect, a “police patrol vehicle” is any state or local police vehicle besides these excluded vehicles.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**Background — Related Bill**

HB 5400 (File 252), favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, has identical provisions.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 29 Nay 0 (03/17/2026)